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The Bowen Affect:
The Short Fiction of Elizabeth Bowen and the Case for Re-Reading Emotion

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been, and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature Karen Ann Schaller

Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my Nannie, Mary Agnes Hill (1922-2007), who always had a book on the go, and to my parents Gerry and Louise Schaller for encouraging me to write my own story.

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University of Sussex

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submitted for the degree of DPhil in English Literature

**The Bowen Affect:
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Summary

This thesis argues that the short fiction of Elizabeth Bowen is acutely preoccupied with reading emotion. Despite the growth of Bowen criticism, her stories remain understudied and this project proposes that their marginal status corresponds to this preoccupation. Through a close engagement with the literary representations of emotion at work in selected Bowen's stories, read alongside Bowen criticism, short story theory, and work on emotion, however, I show how her stories not only anticipate, but radically disrupt, current emotion theory. Recent theorisations of, and research on, emotion and affect across the disciplines tend to rely on the readability of emotion, emphasising the interpretation of specific emotions and reviving practices of affective criticism. Yet Bowen's short fiction foregrounds emotion's textuality: rather than allow us to read emotion 'in' literature, I argue that her stories theorise the literariness of emotion. The project begins by suggesting a correspondence between her stories' engagement with emotion and their status, both within her literary oeuvre and in Bowen scholarship, to suggest that the complexity of her short fiction is often under-represented by occluding the deconstructions emotion mobilises. This enables us to map critical debates amongst Bowen scholars about the radicality of Bowen's fiction onto wider narratives about emotion and critical resistances to its textuality. I go on to undertake close readings of selected stories to show how Bowen's short fiction destabilises, rather than reinforces, the geographies of subjectivity, reality, time, and materiality to which emotion is presumed to belong. This project extends Bowen criticism that observes the ways her work anticipates psychoanalytical and Derridean readings, but through its focus on the short story it offers the second focused study of Bowen's short fiction, and the first study of her short fiction to be informed by critical emotion theory. Not only does this thesis carve out a new territory within Bowen scholarship, but it offers a timely contribution to problems in thinking emotion and affect in literary criticism and theory. More broadly, it is my hope that my reading of Bowen demonstrates the necessity of attending to the textuality of emotion in the reading and theorisation of emotion across the disciplines.

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List of Abbreviations

All short stories by Elizabeth Bowen are cited using in-text parenthetical references to the 1999 Vintage collection or, on a few occasions, to Hepburn's 2008 collection of previously uncollected stories. Where appropriate I have provided a footnote with original publication details. Essays by Bowen are drawn from those collections noted below; footnotes provide the specific essay title followed by the abbreviated collection title and page numbers. All other primary material (including novels and letters) has been cited using footnotes.

B *The Bazaar and Other Stories*, ed. by Allan Hepburn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).

CS *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage, 1999).

APaW *Afterthought: Pieces about Writing* (London: Longmans, 1962).

CI *Collected Impressions* (New York: Knopf, 1950).

MT *The Mulberry Tree*, ed. by Hermione Lee (London: Virago, 1986).

PaC *Pictures and Conversations* (London: Allen Lane, 1975).

All definitions and etymologies are from the Oxford English Dictionary Online, unless otherwise stated, and will be cited using 'OED Online'.

Introduction

Bowen's 'Shrewish' Short Stories

In February of 1941, Elizabeth Bowen replied to an invitation from Virginia Woolf to visit. Bowen's letter is brief: she asks about buses from Lewes to Rodmell, mentions an upcoming christening, and explains that she will begin her journey after lunch, as she has friends coming to 'eat a turkey...brought from Ireland'.¹ Personal, funny, perhaps even intimate, there is nothing obviously radical about Bowen's letter. But towards the end of the final page, she runs out of space. Before signing off, there is a cramped paragraph which, reaching the end of the line, is completed, scrawling upwards, in the left-hand margin: 'Here are the short stories', she writes, ' – most of them, as I said, except Summer Night, were written three, four, or five years ago. They now seem to me to be rather shrewish. Please read the last one first. Much love, from Elizabeth'.²

Spread between the letter proper and its margins, Bowen's remarks are doubly located. Concluding by introducing the stories makes these an important part of the letter; their presence is major. But Bowen's remarks also have the quality of an afterthought, a minor observation. Significant, and at the same time marginal, Bowen's remark on her stories figures what has come to be, until recently, Bowen's own status in twentieth century literature and criticism, what Susan Osborn describes as that quality of being 'not quite in but never quite out either'.³ Yet Bowen's comments also invoke,

¹ Letter from Elizabeth Bowen to Virginia Woolf, February 3rd, 1941. Bowen's letter is held in the Monks House Papers in the Virginia Woolf Archives at the University of Sussex Library Special Collections.

² Ibid.

³ Susan Osborn, 'Introduction: Elizabeth Bowen: New Directions for Critical Thinking' in *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 53: Number 2 (John Hopkins University Press: Summer 2007), pp. 225-237, p. 227. Osborn's introduction and the critical essays from the special edition of *Modern Fiction Studies* were

within that critical scholarship, the marginal status of her short stories. As Phyllis Lassner remarks, Bowen's critical readers 'never fail to refer to her stories, but the latter are usually read as glosses on the longer works'.⁴ The growth of Bowen studies has begun to provide the stories with a critical life of their own and retrieve them from marginality. Yet this project begins by suggesting that Bowen's remark registers a more specific, and marginalised aspect of Bowen's short fiction: their preoccupation with emotion.

This project is not the first to suggest a relationship between Bowen's short fiction and emotion – Bowen herself insisted that the short story without passion 'desiccates into little more than a document'.⁵ Phyllis Lassner remarks that critics of Bowen's stories have taken their 'cue from readings of her novels', characterising her work as that of a 'social critic, a psychological realist, and a dramatist of moral truth'.⁶ Far from overlooked, emotion has been the critical tool that underpins these readings, by locating their 'feeling of depth, of sympathy, experience realized', and 'antithesis between external fact and internal reality, between the objective condition and the projection of an internal world where feeling alone reigns'.⁷ Observing the tendency to universalise both Bowen's stories, and the psychological realities they have been argued to portray, Lassner argues instead that it is their distinctive engagement with emotion that sets the stories apart from the novels:

recently published as an edited collection of essays in Susan Osborn (Ed.), *Elizabeth Bowen: New Critical Perspectives* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2009). Where needed this study distinguishes between Osborn's introduction to *MFS* and her introduction to *New Critical Perspectives* by date.

⁴ Phyllis Lassner, *Elizabeth Bowen: A Study of the Short Fiction* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), p. xi.

⁵ 'Stories by Elizabeth Bowen' in *The Mulberry Tree*, ed. by Hermione Lee (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), pp. 126 – 130, ps. 130, 128.

⁶ Lassner, p. 157.

⁷ Lassner quotes John Bayley's discussion of 'Mysterious Kôr' (p. 159) and Edward Mitchell's categorisation of Bowen's 'themes' (p. 163). See John Bayley, *The Short Story: Henry James to Elizabeth Bowen* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1988), pp. 175-175 and Edward Mitchell, 'Themes in Elizabeth Bowen's Short Stories' in *Critique* Vol. 8 (Spring-Summer 1966), pp. 41-54, p. 50.

Overtaking a primary feature of the novel, she develops the idea of a story's action as a drama taking precedence over character development. Instead of character, emotion shapes events, and even contemporary political issues are transformed into "dislocated and stabbing" feeling (*CI*, 46). Even setting or atmosphere, as she writes in the preface to *Encounters*, is given its frame by emotion.⁸

Overtaking what she describes as the critical tradition of 'acknowledging the significance of Bowen's background' before interpreting Bowen's stories as 'psychological studies that universalize the terror of modern alienation'⁹, Lassner's study departs from previous criticism of the short fiction by arguing that the psychological forces of Bowen's work are those of 'personal and cultural history shaped by social, economic, and political forces internalized as the individual's sense of self'.¹⁰ For Lassner, Bowen's interest in the psychological complexifies the 'literary, social, ideological, and epistemological questions'¹¹ with which her stories are occupied. Positioning Bowen's short fiction as 'a response to her dual heritage and to the turbulent and unresolved history of Ireland', Lassner traces the importance of emotion in Bowen's stories to an 'immediacy of...subjectivity' by which the stories 'dramatize the way in which consciousness shapes history'.¹² Since its publication in 1991, Lassner's remains the only study to focus exclusively on Bowen's short fiction, offering a valuable contribution to the future of Bowen studies. The comprehensiveness of her

⁸ Lassner, pp.119-120. Lassner quotes from Bowen's review of *The Faber Book of Modern Short Stories* in *Collected Impressions* (New York: Knopf, 1950).

⁹ Lassner, p.3. Amongst those studies that Lassner argues make up this tradition are Howard Moss's 1979 discussion of children in Bowen's short fiction for the *New Yorker* ('Interior Children' in *New Yorker* (February 5, 1979), pp. 121-128), William Heath's 1961 study *Elizabeth Bowen* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), Edwin Kenney's 1974 study *Elizabeth Bowen* for the Irish writer's series (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press), and Harriet Chessman's argument that women in Bowen's fiction are 'outsiders to discourse' as examples of this tradition ('Women and Language in the Fiction of Elizabeth Bowen' in *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 29 (Spring, 1983), pp. 69-85, p. 70).

¹⁰ Lassner, p. 3. This tradition is perhaps exemplified by Allan Austin's remarks that Bowen 'sees the essential being residing in the state of feelings; moreover, the quality of an individual's life is directly related to the depth and honesty of his felt life. Perhaps in an age in which the human mind has shown its limitations in the face of perpetual flux and overwhelming data, the possibilities for survival...truly reside in the emotional being' (Allan Austin, *Elizabeth Bowen* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971), p.20).

¹¹ Lassner, p. xii.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 8,4.

study, which considers all seventy-nine stories then widely available to the public in *The Collected Stories*, is still timely in its caution against reducing Bowen's stories to 'glosses' on the novels.¹³ Allan Hepburn's recent publication of *'The Bazaar' and Other Stories* will no doubt add to the possibilities Bowen's stories offer by sharing with Bowen's readers an additional 17 published but previously uncollected stories, and 11 fragments of stories previously available only in archives.¹⁴

The growth of Bowen studies has begun to provide the stories with a critical life of their own. While focused on Bowen's novels, Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle's 1995 study *Still Lives: Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel* observes the destabilising effects of touch at work in 'Hand in Glove' and the hallucinatory effects of Bowen's war-time stories.¹⁵ In Maud Ellmann's *Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow Across the Page*, 'Look at All Those Roses' initiates the 'nothings' that the study traces throughout Bowen's writing. Ellmann develops the uncanny geometries of love at work in *The Hotel* and *Friends and Relations* through readings of 'The Secession' and 'The Shadowy Third', and draws out the explosive collisions of past and present in 'The Happy Autumn Fields'.¹⁶ Neil Corcoran's *Elizabeth Bowen: The Enforced Return* intimates a poetics at work in Bowen's short fiction that lends to 'The Back Drawing-Room' a 'decorously baleful momentum' that is haunting in its silences about the 'end of her class'.¹⁷ Corcoran also locates in Bowen's *The Demon Lover and Other Stories* a

¹³ Lassner discusses those stories collected in *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* (New York: Knopf, 1981).

¹⁴ See Elizabeth Bowen, *The Bazaar and Other Stories*, Ed. Allan Hepburn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).

¹⁵ See Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *Still Lives: Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel* (London: St. Martins Press, 1995), pp.90; 168-169.

¹⁶ Maud Ellmann, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow Across the Page* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).

¹⁷ Neil Corcoran, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Enforced Return* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 34.

retrieval of feeling from the past to restore and preserve the ‘uncertain “I”’.¹⁸ For Renée Hoogland, whose study discusses Bowen’s preface to *The Demon Lover and Other Stories*, these war-time stories reaffirm ‘the social basis of subjective experience’.¹⁹ Confronted with the tearing down of social barriers and places, Hoogland argues, the stories not only signal how the war ‘threatened the total extinction of the self’ but that literature, for Bowen, ‘puts up a defense against the threat of total disintegration’.²⁰

Despite the growth of interest in Bowen’s stories, however, critical work on her short fiction is still dominated by attention to those included in the *Demon Lover* collection, and, more particularly, to ‘The Happy Autumn Fields’, ‘The Demon Lover’, and ‘Mysterious Kôr’. Discussions of these tend to hinge on the effects of the war on Bowen’s literary formations of subjectivity; crucial to these arguments is an attention to the emotional effects of Bowen’s writing, and to the way these help us interpret the stories’ contexts as well as trace the trajectory of her literary development. In particular, while critics disagree about the extent to which the war stories, in Hoogland’s words, defend against disintegration, there is little consideration of the ways this kind of ‘disintegration’ may have been at work in her earlier stories and, instead, critics tend to locate this aspect of Bowen’s innovation and strangeness as a direct response to the war. Just as Lassner argues that Bowen’s stories have been read as ‘glosses on the novel’, however, I would argue that scholarship of the short fiction tends to treat these as *emotional* glosses on the psychological, historical and socio-cultural contexts and derivations of her work, her characters, and Bowen herself. While this is something Bowen’s prefaces themselves might be argued to invoke, the stories are far less

¹⁸ See Corcoran’s chapter ‘Words in the Dark: *The Demon Lover and Other Stories* (1945)’ (pp.147-167). Corcoran’s argument draws the ‘uncertain “I”’ from Bowen’s preface to *The Demon Lover and Other Stories* (MT, pp. 94-99).

¹⁹ Renée Hoogland, *Elizabeth Bowen: A Reputation in Writing* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), pp.110, 113.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

transparent about emotion.²¹ As the only sustained study of Bowen's short fiction, Lassner's is also perhaps the most problematic in this regard: organising Bowen's stories into the 'literary, social, ideological, and epistemological questions'²² she argues they pose, Lassner's thematisations also depend on reading the emotions of Bowen's characters to organise the stories into a coherent oeuvre. In this way, despite its value to scholarship on the short fiction, Lassner's study at times under-represents the complexity of emotion more generally, and, specifically, the ways Bowen's short fiction engages with ideas about emotion. It is precisely this complexity that I believe preoccupies Bowen's short fiction. Bennett and Royle observe that Bowen's novels 'appear to accommodate...highly traditional notions of literary criticism (a focus on 'life', close reading, the affective power of literary texts)' and also represent 'powerful, theoretically-informed sites of cultural and ideological disruption'.²³ This thesis extends Bennett and Royle's observation to Bowen's short fiction: but in doing so, I argue that the affective power of Bowen's stories *is* what mobilises their radical disruptions.

Bowen's stories anticipate theorisations of emotion that have emerged in the more recent critical turn to emotion, affect, and feeling across the disciplines, but they also challenge, in important ways, the readings of emotion these theorisations give rise

²¹ For example, the reader of *Encounters*, Bowen tells us, must 'allow for the intellectual fashion, and for the psychological climate of a decade. The now famous 'twenties, asceptic and disabused, had already set in, though without a name'[sic] (*APaW*, p. 86). To the reader of *The Demon Lover and Other Stories*, Bowen draws out the stories' commonalities: 'one finds a woman projected from flying-bombed London...into the key emotional crisis of a Victorian girlhood...a man...peers through the rusted fortifications and down the dusty empty perspectives of a seaside town at the Edwardian episode that has crippled his faculty for love...[and] a girl is led to find the key to her neurosis inside a timepiece' (*MT*, p. 97-98). And in her preface to *Stories by Elizabeth Bowen*, Bowen writes that the short story 'allows for what is crazy about humanity: obstinacies, inordinate heroisms, immortal longings' (*APaW*, p. 80). Explaining why she chose these stories, amongst her thirty-six years of story writing, to represent what 'kind of stories' she wrote, Bowen notes: 'Each of these arose out of an intensified, all but spellbound beholding, on my part, of the scene in question...Each time I felt: 'Yes, this affects me – but it would affect "X" more.' Under what circumstances; for what reason? And who is 'X'? In each case, the 'X' I pondered upon became the key character in the resultant story' (*APaW*, p. 79).

²² Lassner, p. xii.

²³ Bennett and Royle, p. xiv.

to. Bowen's critics have observed the acuity her writing has to its own status as writing, how it both entreats, and retreats from, interpretation. Charged with an 'eventfulness' of reading and writing that exceeds the analytic pressures they invite, Bowen's fiction actuates her observation that 'writing is eventful; one might say it is in itself eventfulness...Reading is eventful also'.²⁴ Bennett and Royle's study registers the force of this eventfulness as what mobilises 'dissolutions at the level of personal identity, patriarchy, social conventions and language itself – up to and including the language of fiction and criticism'.²⁵ Maud Ellmann's study shows us how Bowen '*thinks in fiction*', her writing contracted such that her 'ideas are inseparable from her objects, settings, plots, and characters, and from the oddities of her unnerving syntax'.²⁶ Scholarship of the short fiction, however, dominated as it is by the *Demon Lover* stories, perhaps occludes the eventfulness of her short fiction by privileging her own critical interpretation of her stories in her prefaces. Yet as Bowen's foreword to *Afterthought* suggests, her critical writing gives form to, rather than defines, her fiction: it is, she notes, '[e]asy to be wise after the event'.²⁷ While Bowen insisted on the emotional shape and register of her short fiction, this project aims to attend to the eventfulness of this engagement with emotion. Not only do Bowen's fictions 'think', then, but I argue her short stories *feel*: remarkably preoccupied with the problems of how to read emotion, Bowen's short fiction feels for feeling.

In this sense, this project responds to observations circulating through Ellmann's study, and Bennett and Royle's, both of which initiate an attention to how Bowen's fiction destabilises our ideas about emotion. Ellmann draws out the plagiarising effects of love and its geometries in Bowen's fiction, where people often work as place-holders

²⁴ Elizabeth Bowen, 'Foreword' in *Afterthought: Pieces about Writing* (Longmans: London, 1962), p. 9.

²⁵ Bennett and Royle, p. xix.

²⁶ Ellmann, p. 7.

²⁷ *APaW*, p. 9.

and intimacy always requires a third presence²⁸, while Bennett and Royle's study of the dissolutions Bowen's novels effect is punctuated by observations that suggest Ellmann's observations of love might be extended to a re-reading of emotion itself. My project picks up on these propositions; but it also demonstrates my own critical preoccupation with the place of emotion – or difficulty of placing emotion – not only within literary theory and criticism, but across the disciplines. Literary scholarship, is, this project argues, irreducibly tied up with discourses of and about emotion. While criticism is often grounded in specific claims about emotion, or specific emotions, mobilising these for critical ends, emotion itself has until recently, as in other disciplines, worked like an open secret whose remarkable circulation guarantees the economy of criticism, and yet whose presence itself is often considered unremarkable, or unremarked upon. Vital to theorisation, emotion itself is often un-theorised. Both everywhere and nowhere, the critical position of emotion oscillates between its centrality, and its marginalisation, both within disciplines, and across them.

Keith Opdahl remarks that the 'twentieth century may someday be known for its quiet rediscovery of emotion'.²⁹ Certainly, since about the late 1970s, interest in emotion has accelerated across the disciplines to the extent that it would not only, as Sara Ahmed observes in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, be 'impossible'³⁰ to offer a comprehensive survey of emotion theory, but such a survey would also suggest that work on emotion has a cohesiveness as a body of scholarship that it simply does not. Introducing his recent study of emotion theory, James Kagan writes that what he intended to be a discussion of what emotion *is* was able only to summarise what we

²⁸ See Maud Ellmann's discussion of the geometries of love in 'Shadowing Elizabeth Bowen' (pp. 1-39) and 'Impasse: *The Hotel, Friends and Relations*, and 'The Shadowy Third'' (pp. 69-95).

²⁹ Keith Opdahl, *Emotion as Meaning: The Literary Case for How We Imagine* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2002), p. 79.

³⁰ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p.4.

think we know and why. The growth in emotion research meant that completing each chapter ‘resembled the removal of fallen leaves from a vast lawn on a windy day in October. By the time one has cleared the last patch of earth, new leaves have fallen on the area one raked hours earlier’.³¹ Far from decided, the current status of emotion continues to be divided by debates about the extent to which there are basic and universal emotions; the nature of the interactions between the body’s neural, musculoskeletal, and nervous systems; the usefulness of distinctions between orders of emotion; and the extent to which emotion upholds or disrupts the boundaries of the subject. Evolutionary psychology, for example, continues to develop Darwin’s thinking about facial expression, and the idea that the body’s physical expressions of emotions can be reliably read or decoded has been widely popularised by Paul Ekman’s work on both expression and emotion more generally, and tends to pivot around the idea of ‘revealing’ or decoding emotion.³² Neuroscience remains significantly divided about the extent to which the brain interacts not only with the other constitutive components of the body but also with society. Antonio Damasio has offered an unexpected ‘material’ ally for those interested in the performativity and cultural aspects of emotion and has had a significant impact on the popularisation of the neuroscience of emotion.

³¹ James Kagan, *What is Emotion? History, Measures and Meanings* (New Haven: Yale University Press: New Haven, 2009), p. xi.

³² See Ekman’s *Unmasking the Face: A Guide to Recognizing Emotions from Facial Expressions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Malor Books, 2003); *What the Face Reveals: Basic and Applied Studies of Spontaneous Expression Using the Facial Action Coding System (FACS)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); *The Nature of Emotion: Fundamental Questions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); *Emotions Inside Out: 130 Years After Darwin’s Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (New York: New York Academy of the Sciences, 2003); and *Emotions Revealed: Recognizing Faces and Feelings to Improve Communication and Emotional Life*, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt Books, 2007). There are too many critical engagements with the ‘legibility’ of emotion to adequately catalogue them here, and I am limited over the course of this discussion to those most relevant to the intersection of arguments I undertake here. Some fruitful engagements with the textuality of facial expression, however, are Lynda Nead’s consideration of the ‘making’ of facial expression in relation to the history of emotion in ‘Response: The Art of Making Faces’ in *Textual Practice* 22: 1 (2008), pp. 133-143; Walter Koch’s argument for and discussion of a readability of emotion in *For a Semiotics of Emotion* (Bochum: N. Brockmeyer, 1989), and Angela Rosenthal’s discussion of the legibility of the blush and the politics of race in ‘Visceral Culture: Blushing and the Legibility of Whiteness in Eighteenth Century British Portraiture’ (in *Art History* Vol. 27, No. 4 (Sept 2004), pp. 563-592).

His work also offers a productive attention to the relationships between neuroscience, philosophy and psychoanalysis, while Elizabeth Wilson's research offers an exceptional consideration of the intersections between the body, brain and psychoanalysis to suggest that conversion hysteria might importantly contribute to feminist theorisations of the body.³³ Alongside Damasio, Joseph Le Doux's neuroscience of emotion is equally popular, although his approach is rather different. LeDoux's initial work argued for a significant distinction between the cultural aspects of emotion and the brain states that are its 'facts', however his more recent work examines the synaptic activity emotion involves and this has led him to redefine his earlier distinctions between 'nature and nurture' as 'the nurturing of nature'.³⁴ Most disciplines continue to deploy either explicit or implicit differentiations between different 'orders' of emotion, for instance by distinguishing between 'reactive' or 'basic' emotions and 'intellectual' or 'cognitive' ones, and this becomes evident when reading the literature review of any of the studies that I have noted in this project. This tendency, for example, shapes the methodology of the recent study *The Self-Conscious Emotions: Theory and Research*, which focuses on guilt, empathy, altruism and care-giving because these are perceived to involve more complex social relations and orientations than the 'basic' emotions.³⁵ The study emphasises that those emotions termed 'self-conscious' are those that do not adhere to biological definitions of emotion. We can also see the distinction between orders of

³³ See Damasio's *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (New York: Penguin, 1994); *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness* (London: Vintage, 2000); *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain* (London: Vintage, 2003) and his recently released *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (New York: Random House, 2010). For Damasio's reflections on the estrangement between neuroscience and psychoanalysis see 'On the neurobiology of emotions and feelings' in *Proceedings of the International Neuro-psychoanalysis Congress* Vol. 1 (2005), pp. 41-84. For Wilson's arguments see *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body* (London: Duke University Press, 2004).

³⁴ For LeDoux's work see *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998) and *Synaptic Self: How Our Brains Become Who We Are* (New York: Penguin, 2002).

³⁵ Ed. by Jessica Tracy, Richard Robins and June Tangney (New York: Guilford Press, 2007). Jenefer Robinson and Brian Parkinson's reviews provide particularly good examples of the distinction between 'orders' of emotion (see bibliography).

emotion at work in an emphasis on the rationality of emotion, such as Martha Nussbaum's *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*.³⁶

Although the 'turn' towards thinking about emotion, affect, and feeling is often diagrammed by its scholars as a long overdue response to a history of critical disinterest, Sara Ahmed and Rei Terada remind us that these 'turns' should always be situated as *returns* that emerge from longer histories of ideologies of emotion. As Sarah Ahmed remarks,

...even if emotions have been subordinated to other faculties, they have still remained at the centre of intellectual history. As a reader of this history, I have been overwhelmed by how much 'emotions' have been a 'sticking point' for philosophers, cultural theorists, psychologists, sociologists, as well as scholars from a range of other disciplines. This is not surprising: what is relegated to the margins is often, as we know from deconstruction, right at the centre of thought itself.³⁷

It is this 'sticking point' that interests me – one of the most remarkable aspects of the 'rediscovery' of emotion is that we do not, actually, know what emotion is. Even more remarkably, we proceed as if we do.

Recently, Peter de Bolla argued that the problem with emotion, or 'the problem with understanding its strangeness, its awkward status or function in respect to knowledge, say, or experience is not the languages we use or negotiate in our speaking of it but the concept of subjectivity it upholds and perhaps even protects and

³⁶ Published by Cambridge University Press (2003). For work in the philosophy of emotion outside the scope of this thesis see Robert Solomon's *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), Peter Goldie's *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), and Ronald De Sousa's *The Rationality of Emotion* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1990). His new study *Emotional Truth* will be published by Oxford in January 2011.

³⁷ Ahmed, p. 4.

promulgates'.³⁸ This is because, for De Bolla, what 'links all our current accounts of emotion is a concept of the subject or individual which provides us with the location for emotion. Emotions happen in people'.³⁹ De Bolla goes on to argue that it does not matter when the concept of subjectivity that emotion 'upholds' emerged, only that this is the 'conceptual envelope' in which we live, the '“vrai” that we are “dans”'.⁴⁰ But, while I agree that attending to emotion does demand an attention to the subjectivity it is believed to uphold, it is important to remember that it is not 'emotion' that upholds this idea of subjectivity (as De Bolla's own proposition that we 'begin the task of building a different concept of the subject'⁴¹ would seem to acknowledge), but precisely the ways we 'speak about', 'express' or 'represent' emotion; what upholds this is the work we make emotion *do*, so to speak.

I want to suggest that De Bolla's remarks repeat a familiar narrative about emotion. 'Emotionology' may not be a well-known term for many of today's emotion researchers, but it was introduced in 1985 by Stearns and Stearns to help overcome what they argued was a vital methodological problem confronting the 'new' field of emotion study: the need to distinguish between the 'reality' of emotion – our *actual* experiences of it, and its 'ideation' – the values, orientations, and beliefs a culture, individual or institution or social group holds *about* emotion.⁴² What precipitated Stearns' and Stearns' concern was that the then burgeoning interest in the history of emotions offered 'provocative histories about aspects of emotionology but...said far less about emotion

³⁸ Peter De Bolla 'Afterword' in *Textual Practice*, 22: 1 (2008), pp.145-150, p.149. De Bolla's remarks respond to work collected in a special edition of *Textual Practice* based on a 2004 colloquium 'Languages of Emotion'.

³⁹ De Bolla, p. 148.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 149.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, 'Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards' in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 90, No. 4 (Oct., 1985), pp. 813-836.

than they claimed'.⁴³ Concerned that an emerging emphasis on emotion as a social and cultural phenomena was confusing the distinctions between emotional experience and emotional expression, and implicitly confusing the boundaries between the material individual and their experience in the world, Stearns and Stearns offered 'emotionology' as a taxonomical aid for siphoning one aspect of emotion from the other to assist in 'grasping a phenomenon demonstrably difficult to grasp and adequately described by no single theory of human behaviour'.⁴⁴ Stearns and Stearns' introduction of emotionology registers a kind of scholarly dread of the effects (and, one might suggest, the 'affects') of post-structural theory and what would come to be dubbed the linguistic turn. Rather than distinguish between emotion and emotionology as Stearns and Stearns hoped, however, work on emotion came to scrutinize the distinctions 'emotionology' was meant to preserve. Rom Harré, for example, is one of the few emotion scholars to continue to use Stearns and Stearns' term, yet he now deploys 'emotionology' to indicate the difficulty, rather than necessity, of distinguishing between the 'actual' experience of emotion and its discourses.⁴⁵ In this sense one of the important realizations of 1990s emotion research inflected by the 'linguistic turn' was that emotion cannot be studied apart from the discourses that produce it. As Rei Terada remarks:

It is not possible to talk about what emotion is, however, apart from arguments about how it can be conceived. It is only possible to construct a theory of emotion – or of anything – by asking how to represent it. The difficulty of representing emotion, in other words, *is* the difficulty of knowing what it is, not just for poststructuralist theory but for any theory.⁴⁶

⁴³ Stearns and Stearns, p. 814.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 835.

⁴⁵ Harré observed that the emotions people understood 'themselves to be experiencing depended on what they thought was the situation in which that emotion was experienced' (in Rom Harré and Grant Gillet, *The Discursive Mind* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), p.145).

⁴⁶ Rei Terada, *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the 'death of the subject'* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 41.

Yet the implications that impel Terada's work produced for many other thinkers of emotion a rather markedly different effect. Rei Terada observes that it is precisely this kind of observation that precipitated the turn for many emotion scholars away from post-structural theory and particularly deconstruction. Terada introduces her work by recalling a symposium at which emotion and feeling were posited amongst the things that 'linguistic theories cannot do' or explain because it contradicts the very 'elimination of the category of subject' these theories were understood to promulgate.⁴⁷ At the heart of this contention, Terada argues, was the accusation that not only did so-called 'deconstructionist' thinking fail to account for the persistence of emotion in a world that was supposed to be subject-less, but this persistence was being mobilized by the very accounts that were meant to counter the subject they thereby upheld: '[s]ome believe that poststructuralist theory describes a blank, mechanistic world; others point out with irritation that, nevertheless, certain theorists seem all too willing to claim and represent strong emotion'.⁴⁸

Terada's observation is not restricted to the pragmatic philosophers she encountered. In the case of William Reddy's highly influential model for the historical study of emotions, for example, he adapts the performativity of emotion into a theory of 'emotives' that are described as the 'real world anchor of signs': this categorization of emotional experience, he argues, can intervene usefully in the 'relativisms' of post-structuralist theory.⁴⁹ Taking as its central concern the implications of the 'plasticity of the individual',⁵⁰ for political agency and questions of liberty, he argues that 'emotives'

⁴⁷ Terada, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 3. Terada observes that these attacks often focus explicitly on Jacques Derrida's writing.

⁴⁹ See William Reddy's 'Against Constructionism: the Historical Ethnography of Emotions' in *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (June, 1997), pp. 327-351. Reddy offers an excellent account of the problems developments in emotion theory present to historiography. Reddy develops his arguments about the performativity of emotion in *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁵⁰ Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, p. 327.

offer a meeting point between the ‘universality’ of human emotion detailed by cognitive psychology and the cultural mutability and performativity of expression: emotion and expression, he argues, ‘interact in a dynamic way’.⁵¹ At stake in this concession to universalism, he argues, is the capacity to establish

a core concept of emotions, universally applicable, that allows one to say what suffering is, and why we all deserve to live in freedom. With reference to this concept of emotions, historical change again becomes meaningful; history becomes a record of human efforts to conceptualize our emotional makeup, and to realize social and political orders attuned to its nature’.⁵²

Like Reddy, literary critic Keith Opdahl (whose arguments underpin and advocate an affective criticism) also develops a theory of emotion that attempts to preserve emotion, and subjectivity, from deconstruction. Opdahl extends cognitive work on emotion to suggest that emotion *is* meaning: while poststructuralism has some potential for understanding emotion, it at least ‘prepares for a study of emotion’ by ‘breaking the positivistic mold... expos[ing] the hidden levers of social and linguistic control...’.⁵³

Yet the work of ‘deconstructionist critics’ is for Opdahl more than a little disturbing:

The claim by deconstructionist critics that texts deny their own meaning, privileging distance, devalues empathy with the text and values the analytical breakdown of its meaning – a source of great fun and power, even if it does erode our appreciation of the

⁵¹ Reddy, p. xi. We might also extend these arguments to thinking about analytic and aesthetic philosophy’s description of, and debate over, the ‘fiction paradox’ or the question of how it is possible that we have real feelings for literary – and thus fictional – events or people, a ‘paradox’ coined by Kendall Walton’s 1978 essay ‘Fearing Fictions’ in the *Journal of Philosophy*, which was later developed into his book *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1990). While my thesis does not explicitly discuss analytic philosophy’s debates about the fiction paradox, my arguments are very much an intervention in the assumptions about emotion that make the framing of the paradox possible. For work on the fiction paradox see Noel Carroll’s *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart* (London: Routledge, 1990); Matthew Kieran and Dominic Lopes (Eds.), *Imagination, Philosophy and the Arts* (London: Routledge, 1993); Mette Hjort and Sue Laver’s *Emotion and the Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) and Robert Yanal’s *Paradoxes of Emotion and Fiction* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1999). See also Jenefer Robinson’s survey of theories of emotion for a discussion of key debates, problems and methodologies in work on the fiction paradox.

⁵² Ibid., p. xii.

⁵³ Opdahl, p.192.

masterpieces that define our culture. In this sea change, critics moved from the old humanism, which had a place for emotion and subjectivity, to the relentless world of semiotics...in which all is convention and the only path to knowledge is self-conscious analysis.⁵⁴

For Opdahl, the loss of certainty about identifying emotion that poststructuralist accounts discerned could at least be recuperated into an account of the relationship between power and emotion. The disregard for human experience that he attributes to ‘deconstructionist critics’ renders their thinking irrelevant to, or disinterested in, the study of emotion.⁵⁵ The consequence of such a ‘turn’ is manifest in Opdahl’s argument that there is a special relationship between ‘prose fiction’ and emotion: ‘...emotion is *there* on the page, embedded in language. We can walk around it, studying it from all sides. We can come up close to feel its texture and stand back to view it in context. In prose narrative emotion is stable and public and so uniquely accessible’.⁵⁶ I want to point out that this model simply exemplifies the assumption that there is such a ‘thing’ as emotion that can be defined, identified by particular signs, located, and stabilised so as to study it. In short, it assumes that emotion is readable in that it accedes to and is disclosed by reading, whether in the form of formal analysis, or everyday experience. This is what Sarah Ahmed calls the ‘property’ model of emotion. Observing that we can describe the sense that emotion is ‘contagious’, Ahmed notes that work on archives of feeling, contagion and transmission of emotion, feeling and affect is useful when it draws attention to the ways emotion can move across boundaries; in this way, these models can help to destabilize the notion that emotion belongs ‘in’ bodies. The problem,

⁵⁴ Opdahl, p. 192.

⁵⁵ Opdahl’s comments exemplify Terada’s observation noted earlier about the ways many emotion scholars accuse Derrida’s work in particular of eroding the importance of emotion: ‘...then Jacques Derrida offered deconstruction, and for reasons we still do not understand, critics shifted their attention from the reader’s vicarious experience to the self-reference of language’ (p. 192).

⁵⁶ Opdahl, p. 11.

however, is when these transform emotion into a property, as ‘something one has, and can then pass on, as if what passes on is the same thing’.⁵⁷

While Opdahl’s theory might belie the problems of what Terry Eagleton appointed the ‘dentistry school’ of interpretation, where meaning is waiting to ‘be extracted, like a tooth’⁵⁸, it matters to thinking about both literary practice and the study of emotion because it helps us to trace and trouble wider narratives about emotion that register the ‘horizon of assumptions’⁵⁹ Terada observes at work in critical responses to deconstruction. But it also importantly indexes the investment these narratives have in the recuperative possibilities of emotion, affect, and feeling as the grounds of a reality and subjectivity that can be preserved against textuality. Opdahl’s narrative about our ability to read the relationship between emotion and its representation demonstrates a shift in critical narratives about emotion and our capacity to identify, define and theorise it that charts a turn from discourses of uncertainty about emotion to discourses of critical clarity about the location of emotion in the geographies of relations between bodies, subjects, and objects and, more importantly, between reality and signification,

⁵⁷ Ahmed, p. 10. Ahmed cites Carroll Ellis Izard’s 1977 *Human Emotions* (New York: Plenum Press) as an example. Teresa Brennan’s *The Transmission of Affect* (Cornell University Press: Cornell, 2004) offers a more recent engagement with transmission models of emotion. Whilst Brennan’s does not describe the ‘passing’ of emotion in quite such a reductive way, it does involve an assumption that emotion ‘objects’ can be differentiated as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, suggesting the kinds of problems at work in Ahmed’s critique: ‘...once it is recognised that these demons are familiar affective patterns that can be undone, that these affects can be countered whenever we refuse them entry, once, in short, that they are understood as forces in human affairs that can be cleaned up and transformed, converted back into living energy as they are released from distorting blocks of inertia and repression, then they have no power to whip up the superstition, anger, and anxiety that prevail when their capabilities are inflated. They have power only when we see them, hear them, think them, as well as smell and touch and taste them – and then grant them admission. Their power to torment us exists only as long as we permit it to exist’ (p. 164).

⁵⁸ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996), p. 77.

⁵⁹ Terada’s remark follows her observation that philosophy should be understood to be preoccupied with, rather than uninterested in, emotion, but that this must be traced through an attention to the ‘circularity of the notion that subjects express emotions and emotions require subjects. Interlocking demands for subjects and emotions form a horizon of assumptions which makes it difficult to perceive anything outside it’ (Terada, p. 7). Critical responses to post-structuralism and deconstruction, she argues, must be understood as operating on this ‘horizon’.

materiality and ideation. The return in the humanities to emotion, affect, and feeling is increasingly enamoured by the promises of recuperation these subjects seem to offer.

Perhaps one of the best examples of the persistence of these narratives about emotion is evinced by the critical status of distinctions between ‘emotion’, ‘affect’, and ‘feeling’. In our everyday discourses of emotion, these overlapping terms don’t refer to distinct phenomena but instead suggest the speaker’s orientation to those phenomena – it is this everyday sense that I preserve in this project. Writing in 2001, Terada observes that the ways these terms overlap poses difficulties for a critical discussion of emotion, and so she offers these distinctions in order to facilitate her project:

By *emotion* we usually mean a psychological and at least minimally interpretive experience whose physiological aspect is *affect*. *Feeling* is a capacious term that connotes both physiological sensations (affects) and psychological states (emotions). Although philosophers reserve “feeling” for bodily conditions, I use it when it seems fruitful to emphasize the common ground of the physiological and the psychological. *Passion* highlights an interesting phenomenon, the difficulty of classifying emotion as passive or active. Emotions are often portrayed as expressions of a subject imposed upon by the subject, as when someone is seized by remorse or surprised by joy...some [philosophers] address the ambiguity by dividing emotions into passive and active groups.⁶⁰

Terada acknowledges that these distinctions depend on the critical project that mobilizes them. In *Ugly Feelings*, Sianne Ngai argues that the contemporary ‘affect/emotion’ split originated in psychoanalysis for the practical purpose of distinguishing third-person from first-person representations of feeling, with “affect” designating feeling described from an observer’s (analysts’) perspective, and “emotion” designating feeling that “belongs” to the speaker or analysand’s “I”.⁶¹ Ngai’s observation importantly draws out that these distinctions are intimately connected with the kind of work undertaken

⁶⁰ Terada, pp. 4-5.

⁶¹ Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 25.

within a particular framework of analysis, and are mobilized to deal with resistances to interpretation that the study of emotion encounters. For this reason, she argues that she chooses to maintain this distinction precisely because it registers a continual attention to the work these positionalities do when discussing emotion.⁶²

That our work on emotions should maintain this kind of attention to the slippage in the terminologies we use to talk about it is precisely what Amélie Rorty observed in 1980, in *Explaining Emotions*:

Emotions do not form a natural class. A set of distinctions that has generally haunted the philosophy of mind stands in the way of giving good descriptions of the phenomena. We have inherited distinctions between being active and being passive; between psychological states that are primarily explained by physical processes and psychological states not reducible to nor adequately explained by physical processes; distinctions between states that are primarily nonrational and those that are either rational or irrational; between voluntary and nonvoluntary states. Once these distinctions were drawn, types of psychological activities were then parcelled out en bloc to one or another side of the dichotomies. That having been done, the next step was to argue reclassification: to claim that perception is not passive but active, or that imagination has objective as well as subjective rules of association. Historically, the list of emotions has expanded as a result of these controversies.⁶³

Yet the essays in Patricia Clough's 2007 *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* not only naturalise a distinction between affect and emotion, but also define emotion without attention to this uncertain status. Affect is defined by Clough as the 'non linear

⁶² Ngai's decision to maintain a 'modal difference of intensity or degree, rather than a formal difference of quality or kind' leads, she argues, to a better attention to the 'aesthetic productivity' (p. 25-26) of various intensities involved in emotion, affect and feeling. Ngai's argument is particularly compelling given that she is interested in those emotions that do not lend themselves to strategic formations and political action, such as irritation (27-28). One of the contributions of Ngai's work is, importantly, the recognition that emotion is not contained in those 'sociolinguistically fixed' categories we designate as emotion, allowing her to observe the ways in which cultures invent, rather than represent, emotions, and the ways texts actively intervene in the readability of emotion, which she develops in relation to Stein's modernism in her chapter 'Stuplimity' (pp. 248-297).

⁶³ Amélie Rorty, 'Explaining Emotions' in Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Ed.), *Explaining Emotions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp.103-126, pp.104-105.

complexity out of which the narration of conscious states such as emotion are subtracted'.⁶⁴ Subtracted from affect, emotion is also subtracted from the discussions that form the collection, except for two moments that are suggestive for the distinctions they make between affect and emotion. Elizabeth Wissinger contends that because 'affect' has been deployed in different disciplines to refer to 'demeanour, the external expression of emotion, or emotions more generally'⁶⁵, it is necessary to distinguish emotion from the affect that 'Silvan Tomkins...understood [as] specific physiological responses that then give rise to various effects which may or may not translate into emotions'.⁶⁶ What distinguishes affect and emotion here is that emotion, which is already conceived of as *a* representation, is also understood to be open to reading; affect, however, is not yet organized and therefore not represented. This distinction seems to institute a variation on the logos of depth in the form of temporality. The other discussion of emotion in the collection, however, reintroduces this distinction by advocating that Antonio Damasio's definition of emotion, in which 'the actual physical response of the organism as [stimulus] is mapped and modified by the brain'⁶⁷, be understood as a definition of *affect*, because Damasio's construction of emotion more closely resembles Spinoza's definition of affect as the 'power to act'.⁶⁸ The very critique Damasio's conceptualization of emotion might pose to an 'affect/emotion' split is then recuperated by allocating 'capacity' purely to affect rather than emotion. I am

⁶⁴ Patricia Clough (Ed.), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (London: Duke University Press, 2007), p.2.

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Wissinger, 'Always on Display: Affective Production in the Modelling Industry' in Clough, pp. 231-260, p. 232. Wissinger argues that this is the distinction Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick undertakes, but Kosofsky Sedgwick's study undertakes this distinction only when she shifts from 'common usage' to Tomkin's definition, a shift that in itself observes the critical texture of this distinction. See Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (London: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 24, n1.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ariel Ducey, 'More than a Job: Meaning, Affect, and Training Health care Workers' in Clough, pp. 187-208, p.190.

⁶⁸ Ducey, p. 192.

curious about these moments because they work by siphoning emotion from affect, or replace emotion with affect, precisely because of the contradictions emotion appears to present. My point here is not to question the calibre of thinking about affect, but to problematise how this thinking advances by distinguishing affect *from* emotion, doubling the ‘affective turn’ with a turning away from the conceptual difficulties attached to emotion. I want to suggest that the risk of assuming emotion has been defined is two-fold: it not only under-represents the complexity of the intersections of thought that underpins our ideas about emotion, but also under-represents the extent to which our thinking about emotion is produced by the very disciplinary discourses and critical genealogies that study it. Anthropologist Catherine Lutz, whose work I discuss in Chapter One, once remarked that emotion is one of the most powerful devices by which domination proceeds.⁶⁹ While my thinking about emotion has come to be differently inflected than it was when I first read Lutz in 1999, her observation is still at the heart of the ways I think about emotion. Underpinning my engagement with the increasing interest in emotion, affect and feeling across the disciplines, then, are the questions prompted by Rei Terada’s observation that discussions of emotion are always ideological.⁷⁰

Asked in an interview with the *Oxford Literary Review* in 2006 about the ‘affective turn’, Imogen Taylor replied:

I could dwell for sometime on what I find problematic about the recent turn to feeling, emotion and affect within the humanities...I find the turn to affect particularly problematic in the work of thinkers such as Brian Massumi (2002), for whom a focus on the ‘affective’ is explicitly understood as a ‘turn away’ from the perceived limitations of

⁶⁹ Catherine Lutz, ‘Engendered Emotion: Gender, Power & The Rhetoric of Emotional Control in American Discourse’ in *The Emotions: Social, Cultural and Biological Dimensions*, ed. by Rom Harré and W. Gerrod Parrott (London: Sage, 1996), pp 151 – 170, p. 158.

⁷⁰ Terada, p. 14.

ideological and representational critique and ‘back to’ some pure, mythic, vital, materiality.⁷¹

Massumi’s *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* is the text cited by Clough as a significant influence on the thinkers in her collection. Massumi offers this distinction between emotion and affect:

...emotion is subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity [affect], the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized. It is critical to theorize the difference between affect and emotion. If some have the impression that affect has waned, it is because affect is unqualified. As such, it is not ownable or recognizable and is thus resistant to critique.⁷²

Massumi argues that it is *critical* to distinguish emotion from affect: but to delineate how emotion is sociolinguistically fixed he refers to specific emotions. Yet, as Zoltán Kövecses points out in a critique of neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux’s hardening of the distinction between the materiality and ideation of emotion, if we only locate emotion in the content that categorises or designates emotion, and more particularly the content we may recognize as designating emotion, then we are already encountering it at a point of objectification. As Kövecses points out, the idea that emotion inheres in particular content is an ‘unsatisfactory kind of linguistics, in which emotion language consists only in literal emotion words, such as *fear*, *anxiety*, *terror*, *apprehension*, that classify and refer to a pre-existing emotional reality (the brain states and bodily responses)...[that]

⁷¹ Imogen Taylor, ‘Colonized Feeling’ in *Oxford Literary Review*, Vol: 28 (London, 2006), pp. 155 – 170, p. 167.

⁷² Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (London: Duke University Press, 2002), p.61. For Massumi, affect is ‘an ability to affect and a susceptibility to be affected’ while ‘[a]n *emotion* or *feeling* is a recognized affect, an identified intensity as reinjected into stimulus-response paths’ (p. 61).

can only lead to an over-simplification of the many subtle ways in which emotion and language interact...'.⁷³

I do not wish to conflate Le Doux and Massumi's distinctions but remain curious about why Massumi's differentiation between potentiality and actualisation needs to iterate a distinction between affect and emotion. Fixing emotion braces the fluidity of affect that moves Massumi's arguments, yet interrupts the motions of emotion – from 'e-movere', 'to move out' – in order to make it do work. While Massumi's observation that thinking about discursivity has limited spheres of applicability is perhaps correct, I am unsure how the distinction between affect and emotion does not also imply discursivity with affect.⁷⁴ Even if what we speak of is presumed to *be* prior to representation, it is unclear as to how a conceptualization of affect that is determined *against* emotion can exclude what this relationality makes possible from the problems of relationality. If, as Massumi argues, it is *an* emotion's escape from affect that allows the 'autonomy of affect'⁷⁵ to retain that autonomy (its openness as a 'system'), then it suggests this differentiation between what is outside the sphere of applicability of discourse and what is within this sphere, is given its very spatiality and capacity to be thus distinguished, by emotion. The exclusion of emotion from the more recent discourse about affect itself indicates the importance of attending

⁷³ Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphors and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.xi-xii. Joseph LeDoux's approach to the neuroscience of emotion shares a conceptual history with systems theory's relationship to programming, which underpins Massumi's discussions. While LeDoux's *The Emotional Brain* (Orion Books Ltd: London, 1996), which Kövecses critiques, argues that 'brain states and bodily responses' are the 'fundamental facts of an emotion' whilst 'linguistically differentiated conscious feelings' are 'the frills that have added icing to the emotional cake' (p. 302), LeDoux's later work complicates this argument. Although he still postulates a sense of self as a 'single, integrated individual', LeDoux's argument suggests that this individuation is, itself, determined by the spaces between neurons (synapses) that induce the interdigitation of the neural system that leads to individuation. Given that these synapses themselves develop through interaction, this complicates the hardened distinctions between materiality and ideation that his earlier work had insisted on (see *Synaptic Self: How Our Brains Become Who We Are* (Penguin Books: New York, 2002)).

⁷⁴ See Massumi's introductory discussion, particularly p. 7.

⁷⁵ Massumi, pp. 35-36.

to the conceptual work that is done by our ideas of emotion. This project cannot be a direct engagement with Massumi, nor can it resolve the questions Massumi's definition of emotion raises, but his emphasis on there being a hardened distinction between the 'order and logics'⁷⁶ of emotion and affect continues to preoccupy my thinking. It seems especially important that the definition of emotion that is being offered by the 'affective turn' be retained as a problem, rather than a conclusion, because this distinction announces a designation of emotion that implies a recuperation, as Michael Hardt's foreword to Clough's edition puts it, of 'what affects are good for' that gains its escape from 'critique' by turning away from the interpretive problems emotion involves by making it, paradoxically, accede to interpretation.⁷⁷ Rei Terada's critique of the affect-emotion split is suggestive in this regard. She argues that theorizing non-subjectivity out of affect tends to work by reinforcing associations between emotion and centred subjectivity. For this reason, Terada contends that 'championing affect is not the best way to debunk the supposed connection between emotion and subjectivity...because proponents of the subject are willing to compromise on affect'.⁷⁸

Whilst De Bolla argues that it does not matter how we talk about emotion, feeling and affect, or what constitutes the 'envelope of conceptuality'⁷⁹ in which we live, I want to suggest that Massumi's reinsertion of emotion into a spatial and temporal geography of 'narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning' is not necessarily a capture of emotion but captures with absolute intensity the importance of thinking about how we are writing about emotion. While Massumi and Opdahl undertake what might look like radically different projects, these overlap in their

⁷⁶ Following one of his introductory 'parables', Massumi concludes: 'Affect is most often used loosely as a synonym for emotion. But one of the clearest lessons of this first story is that emotion and affect – if affect is intensity – follow different logics and pertain to different orders' (p. 27).

⁷⁷ Michael Hardt, 'Foreword: What Affects are Good For' in Clough (pp.ix-xiii).

⁷⁸ Terada, p. 7.

⁷⁹ De Bolla, p. 149.

diagramming of emotion. In both cases, it is presumed that emotion is captured and narrativised – or stilled – and thus it accedes, albeit in different conceptual frameworks, to epistemic pressure, reinforcing geographies of relations between ideality and substance, fiction and reality, bodies and texts, discourse and materiality. For Opdahl, that emotion inheres ‘in’ texts makes emotion a representation within which meaning can be discovered, whilst for Massumi emotion’s intensification of and thus escape from affect and ‘reinsertion’ into function and meaning provides proof of the autonomous affect that is ‘resistant to critique’.⁸⁰ In this sense ‘emotion’ is, in both cases, being activated to materialize or evidence what cannot otherwise be accessed; emotion becomes a kind of interface that coheres what is otherwise incoherent. Importantly, the conduit thus provided by emotion (whether as Opdahl’s meaning or Massumi’s ‘qualified affect’) stabilizes or offers to its ‘reader’ or ‘interpreter’ the specific densities, relationalities, and intensities of its contracture, as if, from this point, the reader of emotion may ‘proceed’. It is precisely the persistence of these interlocking ideas – that emotion can be stabilised and read; that it can be read in a text or in a subject; and that it accedes to this reading – that I am arguing Bowen’s writing disrupts. In this study I share Imogen Taylor’s concern, but I also agree with Terada’s observation that ‘historically, the idea of emotion has been activated to reinforce notions of subjectivity that could use the help’.⁸¹ For these reasons, maintaining an attention to the ways emotion is deployed should be at the heart of ‘forging new directions through a prevailing climate of methodological and political fatigue in the humanities’.⁸²

The interest in emotion, then, has not developed or established a critical security about what emotion *is* but has instead involved the accumulation of distinctions to get at

⁸⁰ Massumi, p. 29.

⁸¹ Terada, p. 14.

⁸² Taylor, p. 168.

the emotion we have not been able to access. Mobilising a flood of terminologies, discourses, and practices of reading or analysis that contract around the insistence that we are either getting closer to emotion or that we have not only identified it but, in some cases, moved on from it, the series of turns executed in work on emotion often repeats the epistemological defensiveness that Rei Terada observes is characteristic of thinking about emotion.⁸³ It is particularly telling of the difficulties emotion presents to its scholars that much of the work since the late 1990s prefers to concentrate on specific emotions, such as fear, love, disgust, and, most recently, shame.⁸⁴ Affording valuable attention not only to the histories of particular emotions, but also to the ways these circulate in what Sarah Ahmed describes as an affective economy, these also, however, attend to those emotions whose taxonomies have already determined our thinking about what emotion is, and those that are perceived to offer the potential for a reparative or recuperative politics. In this sense, critical study itself involves economies of affect. Importantly, the study of emotion also relies on the readability of the emotion studied so that it can be distinguished as a reality apart from the analyst that studies it. My ideas in this thesis have instead been shaped by thinking about the ways an analysis of emotion, to borrow Stearns and Stearns' phrase, leads to its emotionology – emotion exceeds the critical framework or taxonomies deployed to define it. Thinking about emotion is dominated by variations of cognitive theories, which posit that emotion is a judgment, an orientation, an interpretation, a belief, or an appraisal; histories of particular emotions, then, offer histories of specific judgments, beliefs, interpretations, appraisals,

⁸³ Terada, p. 15.

⁸⁴ See for example Sally Munt's *Queer Attachments: The Cultural Politics of Shame* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008).

and orientations.⁸⁵ What interests me, however, is the textuality of these interpretations: rather than designate emotion *as* an interpretation, this thesis is underpinned by those theorists of emotion who mobilize it as an interpretive *event*, rather than an outcome of interpretation. While in 1995, Brian Parkinson suggested that the difficulty of defining emotion should make us ask whether emotion ‘actually exists’⁸⁶, much of the scholarship since the mid 1990s has, as Daniel Gross remarks, moved away from the problem of emotion itself, because it ‘obscures particular histories of shame, guilt, melancholy, and so on’.⁸⁷ Rei Terada, however, observing the ideologies smuggled into discussions of emotions, and in particular in the more recent ‘affect/emotion’ split, argues that it is time to consider that the problem of defining emotion is at the heart of what it *is*.

It is in this sense that Jacques Derrida’s writing has inflected my thinking throughout this project. Two essays have been particularly critical for my thinking about the possibility of reading emotion: ‘Passions: An Oblique Offering’ implies an intimacy between emotion and secrecy and teases out how this intimacy mobilizes critical discourses, while ‘“Che cos’è la poesia?”’, which touches on the invention of the heart, has textured my feeling, throughout this project, for emotion.⁸⁸ Throughout my research I have been struck by how discussions about Bowen’s fiction map larger debates about the possibility of ‘preserving’ emotion from deconstruction, and my thinking throughout

⁸⁵ See Jenefer Robinson *Deeper than Reason: Emotion and its Role in Literature, Music, and Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) for a comprehensive multi-disciplinary review of cognitive theories of emotion.

⁸⁶ Parkinson cites Kleinginna and Kleinginna’s exemplary 1981 paper in this regard, which lists ninety-two ‘distinct definitions organized in eleven separate categories’ (Brian Parkinson, *Ideas and Realities of Emotion* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 4-5). See Kleinginna, P.R. Jr., and Kleinginna, A.M., ‘A categorized list of emotion definitions with suggestions for a consensual definition’ in *Motivation and Emotion*, Vol. 5 (1981), pp. 345-379.

⁸⁷ Daniel Gross, *The Secret History of Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p.18.

⁸⁸ Jacques Derrida, ‘Passions: An Oblique Offering’ in *Derrida: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Derek Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 5 – 35; and ‘“Che cos’è la poesia?”’ in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. by Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 223-237.

this project has been inspired by and engages with the work of Rei Terada, Sara Ahmed, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, whose theorisations of emotion engage, albeit in different ways, with the deconstructions emotion mobilises. Rei Terada's offers an important attention to the ways the 'expressive hypothesis'⁸⁹ diagrams a history of thinking that extrapolates a subject from emotion by creating a circular logic where subjects are presumed to 'have' emotion that they then express outward; the expressions that are visible to others thus offer proof of the subject that is expressed. For Terada, the continual need for classical philosophers to 'hook' emotion *to* the subject, however, suggests that emotion is, instead, non-subjective. This in turn suggests emotion cannot be thought apart from deconstruction. Sara Ahmed's work importantly destabilises the assumption that emotions belong in particular bodies or texts. Instead, she argues that emotions involve circulations that make and unmake bodies, sticking these together in particular relations or allowing them to be held apart. Not only does her work attend to how emotion deconstructs the geographies it is presumed to reinforce, but it also helps us to observe the importance of thinking about emotion as an event, rather than an object or thing. With a tact for the impressions emotion involves, Ahmed shows how emotion initiates sensuous contiguities that trouble simple assumptions about dividing emotion between 'feelings' and 'conscious states' that are 'in' or 'outside' bodies. An attention to the feeling of emotion is elucidated by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, whose sensitivity to the textures of emotion materialises the interpretive potential of emotion at

⁸⁹ Terada observes that 'expression is the dominant trope of thought about emotion' – the expressive hypothesis is the ideological and conceptual work done by the trope of expression in discussions of emotion: 'The ideology of emotion diagrams emotion as something lifted from a depth to a surface... The purpose of expression tropes is to extrapolate a human subject circularly from the phenomenon of emotion. The claim that emotion requires a subject – thus we can see we're subjects since we have emotions – creates the illusion of subjectivity rather than showing evidence of it' (p. 11). What Terada terms the expressive hypothesis is one way of articulating what is meant by the presumption that emotion is readable, a notion that I explicitly challenge through my argument in chapter two that rather than show us how to read literary emotion, Bowen's short fiction demands that we acknowledge the literariness of emotion.

the level of discernment, initiating a dimensionality that undercuts the logos of depth and temporality involved in framing emotions as reactions in the subject or cognitions about an object. All three maintain an attention to the critical histories attached to particular emotions and thinking about emotion, offering an understanding of the ways critical writing feels, and, importantly, how critical this feeling is.

This thesis argues that the short fiction of Elizabeth Bowen is remarkably preoccupied with the problem of reading emotion: anticipating contemporary theories of emotion, Bowen's short fiction also disrupts these. Given the breadth of Bowen's short story oeuvre, as well as the scholarship on emotion, this project can, at best, only be suggestive. Rather than contextualise Bowen's stories within a genealogy of criticism, I aim to show how attending to the ways Bowen's stories engage with ideas about emotion re-contextualises, and disrupts, our critical narratives about those genealogies. In doing so, I hope to show how these stories problematise wider narratives about emotion. In a culture of criticism that has had to contend with giving up what Frank Kermode called the 'satisfactions of closure'⁹⁰, the study of emotion, affect, and feeling is being increasingly deployed to recuperate the dissatisfactions of textuality. It is precisely this turn that I suggest Bowen's short fiction interrupts.

In Chapter One, 'Sheer Gush': Bowen's Critical Feelings', I draw a correspondence between the critical histories of emotion, and Bowen scholarship. I suggest that critical debates about the radicality of *Eva Trout* contracts around readings of emotion, and explore how Bowen criticism maps debates about emotion more generally.

In Chapter Two, 'Frederick's Tears and the Literariness of Emotion', I explore the ways Bowen's stories deploy emotion as a kind of secret, whose reading

⁹⁰ Frank Kermode, 'Secrets and Narrative Sequence' in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 7, No: 1 On Narrative (Autumn, 1980), pp. 83-101, p. 88.

deconstructs relations between ideality and substance, fiction and reality, bodies and texts, discourse and materiality. Both appealing to interpretation, and resisting it, emotion helps us think about how Bowen's stories move our textual practice from reading literary emotion, to engaging with the literariness of emotion; this is how they move.

In Chapter Three, '“Nobody illustrates now, I wonder whether they could”': Motion, Pictures and Fictional Feeling in the Short Fiction of Elizabeth Bowen', I develop this sense of movement to argue that the cinematic in Bowen's short fiction disrupts critical traditions about modernist aesthetics. Interrupting the association between emotion and subjectivity that underpins the emergence of the post-modern non-subject, Bowen's stories challenge the recent revival of the assumption that emotion belongs in the subject.

Throughout, the project suggests the timeliness of reading Bowen given both the affective turn, and the acceleration of interest in the feeling of Bowen's war-time stories. In 'Bowen's Feeling for Feeling' I respond to critical readings that *time* the feeling of Bowen's writing to her literary and personal contexts. Exploring the ways Bowen's stories knit time and emotion together into a textual fabric that enfolds the possibility of reading emotion into its very historicity, I suggest her short fiction returns the most recent turn from emotion to affect back into the temporal geography of emotion itself.

Returning to emotion, Bowen's stories suggest their own movements of what, in her 1951 essay, she called the 'Bend Back'.⁹¹ Having 'gone back' to emotion, I conclude in '“that touch of the farouche”: The Queer Heart of Bowen's Short Fiction' by pointing forward to ways a feeling for emotion might develop our tact for Bowen's

⁹¹ See *MT*, p. 54-59.

short fiction. Bowen's insistence on 'implied emotion'⁹² has, at times, irritated critics and theorists of the short story. Unable to theorise the short story on emotion alone, its criticism is textured with a language of frustrated apprehension; this 'tradition of ineffability'⁹³ is what 'vexes those critics who grapple with the short story as a separate literary genre'.⁹⁴ From 'grappelle', to 'hook', criticism is unable to secure the short story, to take it in hand; yet its critics seem hooked by this retreat, as if it – or they – refuses to detach. Suggesting something like the poetics of Derrida's *hérisson*, 'rolled up in a ball, prickly with spines, vulnerable and dangerous'⁹⁵, the short story feels more offensive. It advances, moving as if on its own. This, Bowen's stories suggest, is its emotion.

*

'They now seem to me to be rather shrewish. Please read the last one first': as Bowen hands the stories over to Woolf, her remark animates them – they become little beasts, wicked, ill-natured, ill-tempered.⁹⁶ They have bite. Underlined, the shrewish stories are flagged up, making Bowen's injunction to Woolf to 'read the last one first' carry the sense of warning or caution: the stories must be handled with care, as if

⁹² This phrase comes from Bowen's 1936 essay 'What We Need in Writing' (*B*, pp. 306-309), where Bowen writes that '[w]e want more emotion implied (not merely written up)' (p. 309). Allan Hepburn describes the essay as a call for 'something vigorous and natural in writing to counter the "weakness and invalidity" of 1930s writing' (*B*, p. 450). This sort of remark, although not explicitly directed at the short story, exemplifies the kinds of vagueness that Susan Lohafer's finds at fault in the vagueness of Bowen's insistence on the 'necessariness' and 'vital fortuity' of the short story (see 'A Cognitive Approach to Storyness' in *The New Short Story Theories*, ed. by Charles E. May (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994), pp. 301-311, p. 301).

⁹³ Lohafer, p. 301. For Lohafer, it is this 'ineffability' that intervenes in the ability to theorise the short story.

⁹⁴ Michael J. Hoffman and Patrick D. Murphy (Eds.), *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction* 2nd ed. (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), p. 100.

⁹⁵ Derrida, '“Che cos'è la poesia?”', p. 233.

⁹⁶ The OED Online defines 'shrewish' as that quality of being: '[w]icked, ill-disposed, malignant'. Particular note is made of its specifically feminine affect: '[o]f a woman: Pertaining to or resembling a shrew; having the character or disposition of a shrew; given to or characterized by scolding'. More widely, to be 'shrewish' is to be '[i]ll-natured, ill-tempered; of a sharp or cross-grained nature'. All etymologies for 'shrew' from the OED Online entry for 'shrew'.

reading them in a particular manner will keep them at arm's length, tame them, perhaps even diminish their capacity to *affect*. That which is shrewish is sharp: its apparently diminutive stature – whether the shrew or the shrewish woman – belies its dangerousness, its potential to radically alter or take over whatever it comes into contact with. The danger of the 'shrewish' is that, although apparently innocuous, it will get under one's skin. The shrew's work is tongue-lashing: derived from the shrew's surprisingly painful bite, from Old English 'screawa', the shrew 'shreds'. Yet its sharpness isn't from a bite that cuts, but from what the shrew leaves behind. Rarely puncturing the skin, the shrew's saliva produces inflammation and reddening of the skin.⁹⁷ What makes the shrew sharp, then, what gives it bite, is not its ability to cut, but that it affects the body of another without rupturing it. The other root of 'shrew' is 'strew': to scatter, to cover, to spread. The shrew spreads itself, leaves its secretion behind – it sticks to what it threatens. Felt long after its bite, it gets hold of you just when you think you've shaken its grip. The shrewish short stories are thus doubly dangerous – they cut through reading alone, spreading their affect no matter how carefully they are handled. Pointing out, in advance, this 'sharp or cross-grained' nature, the letter anticipates the stories' reading effects: how they may rub the wrong way, or irritate their reader. Perhaps the remark offers a touch of cover for a softer side; or perhaps, marginalising them, it allows the stories to work *under cover* by undermining their capacity to affect, their reading effects – writing them off as merely shrewish, the stories are, after all, only words. Undecidable, Bowen's remark is, perhaps, also very shrewd.

⁹⁷ For a discussion of the shrew and its toxic saliva see Sara Churchfield's *Natural History of Shrews* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 97.

A copy of Bowen's letter is held at the University of Sussex. The archives do not record which stories had been sent with her letter; aside from 'Summer Night', we cannot be sure which ones she called 'shrewish'. We can, however, get a taste of sharpness amongst those that might have been included.⁹⁸ In 'The Good Girl', Dagmar discusses a suitor with her cousin: 'Italians are fearfully passionate,' she remarks: 'I know a girl who got bitten by an Italian. But, as I said, that is just their way. Does he make love in English?' (CS: 358). In 'The Cat Jumps', a house's murderous past animates a group of weekenders: Muriel Barker observes of one of the weekenders 'a kind of insane glitter' (CS: 364). In 'A Love Story', Mrs Massey cries: her 'eyes for the first time filled with tears. The access of some new feeling, a feeling with no context, resculptured her face' (CS: 510). In 'No. 16', Jane, having visited a writer she admired, 'still felt herself closely bound to him – he had done no more than hold her wrists, but she was a girl who had never been touched' (CS: 554). And in 'Tears, Idle Tears', a mother's admonition not to cry in the middle of Regents Park causes her young Frederick to 'burst into tears'; later, an onlooker asks of his tear-swollen face: 'My goodness, what's been biting you?' (CS: 485).

These are, of course, all only speculations. But I want to suggest that in 'Summer Night'⁹⁹, the one story named in Bowen's letter, we encounter a rather unexpected sharpness in the innocuous sweetness of Queenie. Most of 'Summer Night' is preoccupied with an affair between Robinson, a 'married man living apart from his

⁹⁸ Those stories noted here are amongst those that, given the dating of Bowen's letter, might have been included. All citations of stories, unless otherwise noted, are from Elizabeth Bowen's *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage), 1999, and will be indicated using parenthetical in-text references. Please see 'Works Cited' for the specific page numbers in the *Collected Stories* for those stories I discuss in detail. For any story discussed in detail I have provided original publication information in a footnote. For further publication information on particular stories see Marcia Farrell's comprehensive online Bowen bibliography (details in 'Works Cited').

⁹⁹ See Elizabeth Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* (London: Vintage, 1999), pp. 583-608. 'Summer Night' was published in *Look at all Those Roses* (London: Gollancz, 1941). Subsequent references are provided in text and refer to the *Collected Stories*.

wife' (588), and Emma, a married woman en route to Robinson's to consummate their affair. While Robinson waits for Emma's arrival, he hosts Justin and his sister Queenie. Their visit, as if entertainment to Robinson, forms a brief episode in the narrative; Queenie, characterised by her deafness, is even more peripheral. While Justin and Robinson talk, Queenie is in the background, but her deafness is sharpened into focus. Perceived by those around her to have heightened feeling Queenie is rendered with an attention to emotion – she is, we are told several times, 'happy', 'inside her sphere of silence that not a word clouded'; she even drops 'hairpins into a heart-shaped tray' (607).

As if belonging to the past, in her 'poult-de-soie parasol' and 'artless dresses' (587), Queenie tantalises with the taste of redemption. Augmented by her very peripherality, Queenie suggests sweetness, a security of feeling that offers an alternative to Emma and Robinson's adultery and the dissonances of war and modernity that occupy her brother (605). For Justin, Queenie seems untouched by the present: he doesn't know 'if she shared his feeling of dissonance, or if she recoiled from shock, or if she were shocked at all' (605). While Justin and Robinson discuss the need for a 'new form for thinking and feeling' (589), Queenie has never been out of touch with feeling: when Robinson laughs at Justin's question about love, 'Queenie felt the vibration and turned round' (591). Queenie's departure from Robinsons's heralds Emma's arrival, and a return to the affair that drives the story. Yet it is as if something of Queenie's innocence lingers after her departure, tainting the atmosphere. Emma realises her adulterous 'adventure' is Robinson's regular 'quiet practice', and Robinson's 'experienced delicacy on the subject of love', soon smothers 'the last of her little wishes for consolation' (604-605). Realising Robinson has broken her 'fairytale' of romance, Emma's 'adventure...died at its root' (604).

The story returns, in its final moments, to Queenie, as if suggesting a compensatory gesture that offers the reader the consolations that Robinson has failed to tender Emma. Until now only peripheral in Emma's broken fairytale, Queenie seems to offer the closure that Emma's summer night refuses. Alone in her bed, Queenie dreams a lovers' walk in which Robinson takes the place of 'her one and only love' (607) from twenty years past; it is Robinson who, in her dream, is 'guided by Queenie down leaf tunnels, took the place on the stone seat by the lake' (608). We close on Queenie dreaming, 'her face turned sideways, smiling, one hand lightly against her cheek' (608). While Justin accuses Robinson of not knowing 'any more about love' (607), it is as if Queenie's dream redeems him. For Phyllis Lassner, Queenie's is 'a romantic vision' that 'creates genuine connections between past and present, passion and tenderness... Queenie's imagination is a saving grace'.¹⁰⁰ Queenie's dream thus summons a love untouched by the dissonant present, offering a vision of the restorative powers of emotion, of genuine connection. Yet it is with Queenie's feeling and her very appeal to a taste for consolation that I suggest the figure of the shrew resurfaces.

Queenie is pointedly sharp from the beginning. She is middle-aged and single: though 'very pretty', she has 'a pointed face'; she 'threatens [her brother] with a pressure he could not bear' (587). Queenie's deafness has a kind of violence: muting her brother, it 'broke down his only defence, talk' (587). Queenie is invasive: whilst her brother is nervous about entering Robinson's house, Queenie 'showed herself happy to penetrate' (589). Queenie makes Justin vulnerable: '[e]xposed to the odd, immune, plumbing looks she was forever passing over his face' (587), her brother cannot deflect her look, nor her speech, instead: 'the things she said out of nowhere, things with no surface context, were never quite off the mark' (587). And Queenie's attention to Justin

¹⁰⁰ Lassner, p. 103.

is ‘not all solicitude, she loved to be teasing him’ (587). She irritates, vexes, gets at and under her brother’s skin.

Queenie’s shrewishness lends her dreaming conclusion to ‘Summer Night’ toxicity; it sharpens into view how the story pulls out, just at the end, from the inside of her dream, to give us Queenie’s touch on her own cheek, her feeling of her own affect. If there is a tenderness in how Queenie lies, ‘in her bed facing the window, with her face turned sideways, smiling’ (608), I want to suggest it is not the tenderness of healing, but the sore-spot of emotion. We read Queenie’s dream freshly bitten by the revelation, at last, of Queenie’s secret: that she had a lover for one night, but he fled from her, from ‘that delicate deaf girl that he could not speak to and was afraid to touch’ (607). Queenie’s dream does not cull love from the past, but offers a keener perception – that it only stays ‘living under a film of time’ (607). Yet if Queenie keeps ‘in her senses each frond and breath of that night’ (608), she offers us no meaning, no redemption, no access to solace. Queenie is turned toward the window, away from us: we are left only with her solitary touch, her own face turned sideways, ‘one hand lightly against her cheek’ (608). Rather than restore the broken present by offering love, she preserves this from us, her emotion returning only our taste for consolation. It is our exclusion from Queenie’s touch, from the affect she tenders herself, that gives the story bite.

Chapter One

‘Sheer Gush’: Bowen’s Critical Feelings

In a letter dated July 1st, 1940, Elizabeth Bowen wrote to thank Virginia Woolf for having her to visit:

It doesn’t seem to me that I’ve ever been so perfectly happy – This seems to me to be all “I...I...I...”, but how impossible, quite wrongly, it is to write about any feeling without identifying oneself, with it. I don’t think I’d ever imagined a place and people in which and with whom one felt so perfectly happy that one felt suspended the whole time, and at the same wanting to smile, and smiling, continuously, like a dog...At the end of which I can only say, thank you both very much. I loved everything that we did.¹

For a writer whose work has been described as presenting ‘controlled analyses of motives and emotions’², Bowen’s effusiveness initiates a letter that is, as she writes, ‘already very wandering’.³ Sugar, berries and domestic servants share the page with air-raid sirens, Cyril Connolly’s recently launched *Horizon* and Bowen’s impending trip to ‘do work’ in Ireland. Figuring a network of intersections between the domestic, manners, sensibility, war, literature, friendship, Anglo-Irishness, loyalty, class, technology, feminism, and (with the letter addressed to Virginia Woolf) literary genealogies and modernism, it is as if the letter writes to the future of Bowen criticism. Not only does the letter anticipate how Bowen will be read, but it also registers the difficulty of reading her work: crossed out words, syntactical ambiguity and a disjunctive use of commas demand an attention to how the letter reaches us, already

¹ Letter from Elizabeth Bowen to Virginia Woolf, dated July 1st, 1940 (Monks House Papers, University of Sussex Archives), p. 1. Subsequent references to Bowen’s letter will be provided using in-text parentheses. Hermione Lee includes an edited version of Bowen’s letter in *The Mulberry Tree*, pp. 214-216.

² Hermione Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen: An Estimation* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 183. First published in 1981.

³ Letter July 1st, 1940, p. 3.

read, gathering interpretation into a texture of critical acuity, that, as Hermione Lee observes of Bowen's oeuvre, 'resist[s] interpretation by over-interpreting'.⁴ It is through attention to such resistances that Bowen's writing has, as Bennett and Royle remark, been more recently engaged by 'current academic criticism and by radical theorists alike', emerging as 'a significant figure within several key areas of contemporary study and interest: twentieth-century women's writing, Anglo-Irish and minority literature, writers of the thirties and forties, postcolonialism and postmodernism'.⁵ If such readings are gathered together in the texture of Bowen's letter, however, the form this interpretive gathering takes is effusion; at the heart of this, what initiates and resists interpretation, is emotion.

Bowen's letter begins by remarking on how the Woolf's home at Rodmell has touched her. Self-consciousness takes hold, however, and the letter turns to analysis. We move from how Rodmell makes her 'feel', lingering on its place in her imagination, to a remark upon the nature of feeling itself: the letter's 'I...I...I...' become 'one'.⁶ But rather than staunch the effusion, this move towards an impersonal analysis *actuates*⁷ it: sentences gush over several lines; clauses – piled up and connected through the use of commas, ellipses, dashes, and connectives – spill into the next. It becomes, at times, uncomfortably close, exceedingly intimate. The letter's sensitivity to this increases as it goes on, gathering into its force a collection of disparate subjects and remarks, until, after three pages, Bowen makes a remarkable statement: 'If I began to

⁴ Lee, p. 64.

⁵ Bennett and Royle, p. xiii.

⁶ Letter July 1st, 1940, p. 1.

⁷ 'Actuate' is a word that recurs across Bowen's writing. In 'Tears, Idle Tears', for example, Mrs Dickinson is described as a 'gallant-looking, correct woman' (CS: 481) who possesses an 'unfailing sense of what not to say, and say it: despair, perversity or stubborn virtue must actuate them' (482-3). According to the Oxford English Dictionary Online, 'Actuate' means to 'make act' or 'make work', indexing similar questions about the relationship activity and passivity as 'passion', as I will go on to explore.

write about affection for you, Virginia, I should degenerate into sheer gush'.⁸ And with this, the effusion dissipates: the tumbling, wandering, transgressive gathering of subjects makes way for Bowen to sign her love:

Meanwhile my love to you both, and all the thoughts of the most continuous kind, that one can only stodgily call good wishes. Good wishes to you both, at all times and thank you for those lovely two days.

Love
from
Elizabeth.

How does writing about emotion 'identify oneself, with it'? What is 'sheer gush'? And why should one 'degenerate into' it? Bowen's letter registers a remarkable strangeness about the relationship between her own writing and emotion that I propose moves critical debates about her writing. Not only does this figure a correspondence between Bowen's writing, and emotion, as critical subjects, but it helps us to consider how, at the heart of these debates, we might read a critical anxiety about the geographies of subjectivity, textuality, and bodily relations associated with emotion. These are the very geographies that Bowen's writing threatens. This thesis suggests that Bowen's short stories, like her letter, 'gush'; in this chapter I want to begin by considering how Bowen criticism intersects with the study of emotion.

Hermione Lee observes that Bowen's fiction has been read as the work of 'a social realist, a Jamesian stylist, a comic satirist of manners, a historian of the Anglo-Irish, a lesbian sensibility, an anti-romantic but passionate analyst of fatal love, a civilian war correspondent, or an elegist for lost innocence'.⁹ Bowen's writing (and indeed its criticism), like her letter, 'wanders'. On the one hand, she has been described as a 'lesser social or domestic realist', at best overlooked and at worst dismissed for, as

⁸ Letter July 1st, 1940, p. 3.

⁹ Hermione Lee, 'Psychic Furniture: Ellmann's Elizabeth Bowen' in *Body Parts: Essays on Life-Writing* (London: Pimlico, 2005), pp.187-193, p.188.

Bennett and Royle observe of such criticism, representing ‘a tradition of the realist novel untouched by the vagaries of modernist or postmodernist experimentalism’.¹⁰ On the other hand, Bowen’s writing and personal life present challenges to neat identifications or categorization; for every reading of Bowen, there is a counter-reading to be located in her work, her life, and often by Bowen herself. Susan Osborn remarks that Bowen’s critics, ‘[t]roubled by the unsystematic ways that her peculiar and in ways often transgressive and non-identical body of work resists historical, generic, and ethnic incorporation...have historically struggled to place or locate her vast oeuvre in one tradition or another’.¹¹ As a result, notes Susan Osborn, Bowen’s work has occupied what Neil Corcoran describes as a kind of ‘critical “limbo”’: ‘Never has her work been quite in, but never has it ever been quite out either’.¹²

Renewed critical interest, however, has sought to respond to some of the difficulties Bowen’s ‘wandering’ presents. Thus, a writer ‘whose work has been taken (however tacitly) to embody the very bulwark of the conventional and “proper” of traditional realism and conservative “society”’¹³ has been more recently re-read as a ‘minor’ and ‘modernist’ writer. To Lee’s inventory of the categorisations Bowen’s work has both invited, and resisted, Osborn adds a further catalogue of critical interventions: Douglass Hewitt’s acceptance of Bowen as a ‘minor’ novelist (albeit one who ‘“turned [her] back . . . on technical innovation” and wrote “delicate small-scale post-Jamesian studies, mostly of children and adolescent girls”’), Glendinning’s ‘link’ connecting Virginia Woolf with Iris Murdoch and Muriel Spark; Blodgett’s ‘psychological realist using symbolic methods’ to ‘produce heightenings of reality’;

¹⁰ Bennett and Royle, p. xiv.

¹¹ Osborn, 2007, p. 226-7.

¹² Ibid., p. 227. For Neil Corcoran’s discussion of Bowen’s ‘critical limbo’ see *Elizabeth Bowen: The Enforced Return* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 11.

¹³ Bennett and Royle, p. xiv.

Lee's 'modern writer' interested in 'dislocation, unease, and betrayal', Hoogland's 'critically practicing feminist', Humble's 'novelist whose "writerly qualities and philosophical concerns" locate her somewhat obscurely "at the highbrow end of the [as yet ill-defined] middlebrow"', and McCormack's reading of her work as adaptations of 'Le Fanu's narrative techniques to represent "altered experiences of reality under the blitz"'.¹⁴ The recent release of Susan Osborn's *Elizabeth Bowen: New Critical Perspectives* generates a sense of some of the directions Bowen scholarship is moving: these include analyses of Bowen's 'Beckettian affinities', her sensationalist intertextualities, her writing of trauma, and the potential and disruptions her work poses to a thinking of agency and ethics. Marcia Farrell, who provided a bibliography to record developments in Bowen scholarship for the 2007 *Modern Fiction Studies*, now keeps a comprehensive online bibliography that is updated regularly to reflect the growth in critical interest in Bowen's work.¹⁵

Each of these readings has opened up new ways of encountering Bowen's work, but, as Osborn reminds us, Bowen criticism demonstrates a significant disagreement about how to read her, and is marked by an emphasis on thematisation and biography. This reading might approach the letter's effusion, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, at having found a 'place' as a reminder of the dislocation that pervades Bowen's fiction to locate this in a childhood marked by her father's hospitalisation mental illness, her mother's early death, and an ensuing rootlessness as she moved

¹⁴ See Osborn's introduction in *MFS* (227) for this review of Bowen scholarship. In addition to the work of Lee, Glendenning and Hoogland, already cited, Osborn draws her discussion from readings of Harriet Blodgett's *Patterns of Reality: Elizabeth Bowen's Novels* (The Netherlands: Mouton, 1975), Douglas Hewitt's *English Fiction of the Early Modern Period 1890–1940* (London: Longmans, 1988), William John McCormack's *Dissolute Characters: Irish Literary History through Balzac, Sheridan, LeFanu, Yeats and Bowen* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993) and Nicola Humble's *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity and Bohemianism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001).

¹⁵ Farrell writes that the 'increasing number of texts by and about Bowen that are being published requires the addition of a new bibliography that will be annually updated' (<http://wilkes.edu/pages/2694.asp>).

between various boarding schools and aunts' houses. Hermione Lee argues that Bowen 'believes in the childhood sources of all writing'¹⁶ and Bowen criticism has demonstrated a preoccupation with Bowen's personal life as a way of unpicking her assertion that writing is 'transposed autobiography'.¹⁷ One of the underlying preoccupations in this thesis is the way these readings themselves often insist on a transmission of emotion from the author's experience, to the reader's. My observations here then are not to suggest that such readings lack merit, but rather to agree with Bennett and Royle's observation that 'to present the meaning and power of novels in terms of the "experience" and "sensibility" of their author is to strangle such novels, so to speak, at birth. The "life" of the novel is blotted out by the focus on the "life" of the author'.¹⁸ My interest is in how attending to the ways Bowen's stories 'think' feeling corroborates this observation.

Alternatively, one might interpret the 'Bowenesque' as an effect of literary tradition, for example as Anglo-Irish writing, modernist experimentalism, or, indeed, as Osborn remarks upon Lee's reading, both – a 'fusion of two traditions, "that of Anglo-Irish literature and history, and that of European modernism"'.¹⁹ Yet these categories do not erase, but accentuate the problem with locating her work. When Bennett and Royle observe Bowen's uneasy situation in the realist tradition, they argue that the process of placing Bowen within a particular tradition or genealogy of writing (they cite Austen, Eliot, James, Woolf, Forster, Lehmann, Compton-Burnett, Spark and Murdoch), has also involved reading her into 'certain (inappropriate) criteria' by which her work is assessed:

¹⁶ Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen*, p. 215.

¹⁷ 'Stories by Elizabeth Bowen' in *MT*, p. 129.

¹⁸ Bennett and Royle, p. xv.

¹⁹ Osborn, 2007, p. 227.

....found to be of secondary significance..[a] certain tautology ensues: if you read Elizabeth Bowen as a minor Virginia Woolf, then that is precisely what you will find – a minor Virginia Woolf...Critics' commonly expressed reservations about Bowen's inability or refusal to distinguish the real from the fictional, together with the opposite claim that her writing is not realistic enough, means that her work is marginalized within the realist tradition.²⁰

Susan Osborn, writing more than ten years after Bennett and Royle, observes the ongoing difficulty in framing Bowen. Citing the decision reached by the editors of the *North Cork Anthology* on whether, and how, to include Bowen as an 'Irish' or 'Cork' writer, Osborn observes how Bowen's biography, as well as her miscarriage of generic expectations, colludes in the difficulty critics have had with placing her. For the editors, Bowen was not identifiable as 'a North Cork writer, either in the sense of being a product of North Cork society, or of being interested in it and writing about it'.²¹ Her place compromised by her wandering nationality (as Bowen's biographers observe, she had lived, since childhood, between Ireland and England), this was further complicated for the editors by her eventual sale of Bowen's Court, the sometimes biting treatment of Ireland in her work, and her offer to do 'secret work' during the Second World War when she was employed by the English Ministry of Defence to report on the atmosphere of politically neutral Ireland. For the editors of the anthology, these 'disturbing irregularities' not only 'complicated their desire to identify her with one national identity or another' but 'increased [their] difficulty when trying to describe them'.²² Not only did Bowen 'not fit', but this un-containability rendered unstable the very definition of 'Irishness' within which they were working.²³ As Osborn relates, the

²⁰ Bennett and Royle, p. xvi.

²¹ Brendan Clifford and Jack Lane, (Eds.), *A North Cork Anthology* (Millstreet: Aubane Historical Society, 1993), quoted in Osborn, p. 226.

²² Osborn, p. 225.

²³ Bowen's 1926 story 'The Back Drawing Room', first published in *Ann Lee's* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1926), fittingly touches on the problem of not fitting when a man, 'looking propped up and a

anthology made a rather remarkable decision: 'Bowen's entry, complete and longer than that of many of the other entrants, is struck out by a line drawn through her name. In this way, the anthology 'include[s] her...in deleted form, in order to explain why she does not belong''.²⁴ By choosing to represent her, excised, the anthology's entry highlights 'the various pressures and threats that Bowen's personal history presents to conventional notions of identity and political and philosophical coherence'.²⁵

Yet this ambivalence is itself already figured in Bowen's 1940 letter to Woolf. Remarking upon her impending return for the summer to Bowen's Court, she writes: '[n]ow it has come to the point I have rather a feeling of dismay and of not wanting to leave this country...I hope I shall be some good: I do feel it's important...I suppose I shall also finish my book. But Ireland can be dementing, if one's Irish and may well be so now'.²⁶ The structure of the last line, rather than resolve or offer closure about national identity or affiliation, instead suggests and syntactically mediates her undecidability. The lack of comma after 'Irish' causes what might have been only an interjection to spill into the final clause, rendering both Ireland's being 'dementing' *and* her Irishness uncertain. Thus the letter itself leaves open the question of whether or not she 'is' Irish, whilst allowing her to comment on her relation to her Irishness. Earlier, the letter uncannily anticipates the *North Cork Anthology* editor's 'strike-out' solution, articulating these problems of dis-placement, dis-location and un-belonging. The letter begins, 'Dearest Virginia, Ever since I got back home I have been thinking about Rodmell – this sounds nonsense, but you must know how some part of one's thoughts

little dejected like an umbrella that an absent-minded caller has brought into the drawing-room', unsettles those gathered by his failure to fit in. His unfitting appearance in the story follows directly from a rumination on 'fitness' and 'fitting' when Mrs Henneker speculates: 'Fitness and unfitness is such a purely objective way of pigeon-holing. Besides, all that is *circular*, isn't it? Fitness for what? To survive. But to survive what? What is one fit for?' (in *CS*, pp. 199-210, p. 200).

²⁴ Clifford and Lane, p. 9, quoted in Osborn, p. 226.

²⁵ Osborn, p. 226.

²⁶ Letter July 1st, 1940, p. 2.

or one's imagination can go on contemplating a place almost continuously...'.²⁷ The letter is typed, but the word 'home' has been struck out by hand and replaced with a written correction: 'here'. If 'here' is emotionally 'wrong' – neutral, unaffected, detached – so too is 'home', implying an intimate attachment to a place not hers, a wrongly located affection. The letter preserves both, 'home' persisting, underwriting, in its deletion, the 'here' that is now readable only against 'home'.

The copy of Bowen's letter used for this project is archived at the University of Sussex Library in the Monks House Papers as part of the collected correspondence of Virginia Woolf. Originally handwritten, it was transcribed when Leonard Woolf removed the letter from the collection. It was his practice, however, to review transcriptions, and correct them:

The handwriting for the amendments belongs to Leonard Woolf. Leonard removed selected letters from various writers, either for sale purposes or to give to others. Being the meticulous person he was, he always ensured that the letters were first transcribed so that a copy would always be part of the original collection. The corrections that you see must be from when he checked the transcript against the original before the latter left the collection.²⁸

Whether the transcriptionist's gaffe is as a result of his or her own misreading, or prompted by an indecipherable hand, it brings out how Bowen's use of 'here' jarred her reader, producing in the transcription a re-writing, and re-narrativisation, of Bowen's 'home'-lessness; 'here' is hidden, secreted behind the more expected, or conventional, 'home'. Woolf's correction, rather than rectify this, accentuates it, putting the hidden 'here' out in the open and crossing out what was meant to be read over it. The gaffe

²⁷ Letter July 1st, 1940, p. 1.

²⁸ I am grateful to Fiona Courage, Special Collections Manager at the University of Sussex Library for not only explaining these corrections to me but also for allowing me to quote her e-mail dated July 21st, 2008. In the letters collected in *The Mulberry Tree*, Hermione Lee has preserved some of the 'strikeouts' and editing characters that evidence the corrections Bowen's letters underwent (see pp. 193; 194; 195), but in her edition of this letter (214) it has been published to read 'here'. It is unclear from *The Mulberry Tree* whether Lee was using the letter from the University of Sussex archive or another version of the letter.

distinguishes the two senses, but at the same time hooks each to the other, deconstructing the difference between ‘home’ and ‘here’ which still stand, destabilised and unresolvable. Later, Bowen comments, ‘I still feel very homesick’²⁹: so, after reading the letter, are we. These moments – the missing comma and the correction – anticipate Bowen’s resistances to critical reading; multiple readings are brought forward, and maintained, rendering reading both visible, and impossible.³⁰

These moments help us to consider how Bowen’s work already possesses a critical acuity to itself, a sense of its own otherness; as such it troubles not only the project of reading Bowen, but as Bennett and Royle argue, the project of reading itself. Both inviting and resisting interpretation, these moments read back to the critic the analyses they seek to discover. And, whilst these are remarkable moments of singularity, they are neither (as moments of ambiguity, undecidability, or uncontainability) singular, nor exclusive, to her letter; her work is traced through by such strange and bizarre twists of syntax, grammar, diction, and structure. Susan Osborn notes that, though previously ‘dismissed or derided as defects of temperament or talent, unaccountable gaffes, obscuring distractions that were not worthy of sustained critical attention’³¹, these have, more recently, drawn the attention of Bowen’s readers who, through attention to these disjunctive features, have begun to consider how her ‘conspicuous and dislocating irregularities – the intriguing and often unfamiliar instabilities of form, language, and composition...lend to her work its uncommon

²⁹ Letter July 1st, 1940, p. 2

³⁰ In this sense Bowen’s letter figures the problems encountered by the editors of the *North Cork Anthology* and the history of Bowen criticism, tracing another moment in which Bowen’s life and writing, as Maud Ellmann notes of Bowen’s Anglo-Irishness, might be read ‘under erasure’: ‘In this sense the Anglo-Irish could be said to exist “under erasure”, which is Derrida’s term for the uncanny afterlife of that which is crossed out’ (Ellmann, p. 10). See Jacques Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).

³¹ Osborn, p. 228.

elusiveness and its uncommon adaptability to a variety of interpretive ploys'.³² As Hermione Lee remarks in her 1999 edition of her study of Bowen's work, she 'needed to show [Bowen's] manners were not just mannerisms, and to read "style" as an essential part of what she has to say'.³³ Bowen herself, responding to criticisms that her work at times 'jars, jingles' the reader, insisted that these 'express something; I want the rhythm to jerk or jar, to an extent even, which may displease the reader'.³⁴

If Bowen sought to jar her readers, however, it is Bennett and Royle's reading of Bowen's novels, in *Still Lives: Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel*, that seems most likely, in recent Bowen scholarship, to displease her critical readers. In what Susan Osborn calls 'undoubtedly the most audacious recent reading of Bowen's work',³⁵ Bennett and Royle register across Bowen's work 'dissolutions at the level of personal identity, patriarchy, social conventions and language itself – up to and including the language of fiction and criticism'.³⁶ Rather than see Bowen's work then as 'at odds' with the concerns of radical theory or contemporary criticism, Bennett and Royle suggest that Bowen's novels, 'precisely because of their apparent conventionality and stability' read the 'dissolution of the twentieth-century novel'.³⁷ Bowen's novels undo 'the very grounds of "character", what it is to "be" a person, to "have" an identity, to be real or fictional'.³⁸ 'Living', they argue, 'in the work of Bowen is dissolving'.³⁹

Such dissolutions are perhaps most powerfully at work in the ways 'reading people' renders uncertain everything associated with living – personality, identity,

³² Osborn, p. 228.

³³ Lee, p. 3.

³⁴ Elizabeth Bowen quoted in Ellmann (166). Ellmann notes that the source of Bowen's remark is a letter to Daniel George, dated June 2nd, 1948, held at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre (175 n57).

³⁵ Osborn, 2009, p. 6.

³⁶ Bennett and Royle, p. xix.

³⁷ Ibid., p. xiv.

³⁸ Ibid., p. xvii.

³⁹ Ibid., p. xix.

being, subjectivity, reality, and emotion. In ‘Convulsions’ for example, *Still Lives* considers the ‘convulsions of body and mind’ that jerk their way through Bowen’s oeuvre, fissuring moments ‘when the body is caught up in and by its own otherness...when the body is haunted by *its own body* as other’.⁴⁰ Locating the convulsions of *Eva Trout*, Bowen’s last completed novel, specifically (but not exclusively) in the face and its expressiveness, they undo the emotions of the face as an expression of interiority, and instead remark upon the tension between describing the face and its ‘involuntariness’ to itself: ‘to describe the living face is to fix it, to still it. But the face is constantly set in motion by a smile, a spoken word, a sneeze a yawn, a twitch, a blink of the eyes. Even at rest or in sleep the face cannot be still, caressed as it is by the mobilities of breathing and the reflexes of dreams’.⁴¹ Facial expression, the very means by which our inner lives are supposed to be readable are, instead, caught into convulsions. The text and body, caught up in and haunted by its own otherness, index the dissolution of subjectivity, how in Bowen people are ‘traversed by uncertain motions, emotions and mobilities’ that ‘furnish the basis for a theory of novel-reading as convulsion-work’.⁴²

Bowen’s acuity to the ‘overlapping and haunting of life by fiction’⁴³ convulses our very notions of what it means to be human; but in observing these convulsions, even acting on them, *Still Lives* has, at times, convulsed its critics. Shortly after the study’s publication, the authors presented a paper about Bowen’s ‘torn-off senses’ – the ‘blasting’ ‘bombing’ ‘explosive’ effects of her ‘singularly strange and violent texts’.⁴⁴ Drawing their title, and dialogue from Bowen’s novel *The Heat of the Day* and from

⁴⁰ Bennett and Royle, p. xxi.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 140.

⁴² Ibid., p. xxi.

⁴³ *MT*, p. 48.

⁴⁴ Bennett, Andrew and Royle, Nicholas, ‘Torn-off Senses’ in *Angelaki*, 3: 3 (1998), pp.153-158. To distinguish this publication from *Still Lives*, subsequent references to this text will be specified by title.

her stories, their reading, they suggest, seemed to set off or detonate the kinds of textual affects that preoccupied them: 'It should perhaps be said that 'Torn-Off Senses,' when presented...had a strange and violent effect on at least some of the audience: three people stood up and walked out within the opening minute or so'.⁴⁵ If the reception of this paper hints that Bowen's critics feel strongly about her work, John Coates' engagement with *Still Lives*' reading of *Eva Trout* makes this feeling critical.⁴⁶

Eva Trout is not only Bowen's last novel, published in 1969, but, of all her novels, perhaps the one that gains least consensus from its critics. While my interest here is in the critical dialogue Coates takes up with Bennett and Royle, it is important to note first that what tends to divide responses to *Eva Trout* between affirming its radical displacements or confirming its aesthetic failures has been the question of whether the novel represents a culmination of Bowen's literary preoccupations, or a disturbing departure from her oeuvre.⁴⁷ As Susan Osborn and Neil Corcoran's discussions of responses to *Eva Trout* suggest, at stake in anxieties about the relationship between *Eva Trout* and the rest of Bowen's novels is the ability to discern the boundaries of Bowen's experiments with realism, and, in so doing, secure the temporalities of her writing in the genealogies of modernism and postmodernism.⁴⁸ Yet, as Coates' introduction to his discussion makes clear, these divisions are also acutely felt, though not necessarily articulated or recognised, by *Eva Trout*'s critics, as

⁴⁵ Bennett and Royle, 'Torn-off Senses', p. 153.

⁴⁶ John Coates, 'The Misfortunes of *Eva Trout*' in *Essays in Criticism* (48:1) (Oxford University Press: 1998), pp. 59-79, p. 61.

⁴⁷ My phrasing here borrows from Coates, p. 59. See Neil Corcoran's 'Childless Mother: The Disfigurations of *Eva Trout* or *Changing Scenes* (1968)' in his study *The Enforced Return*, pp.126-144, and Susan Osborn's introduction to *Elizabeth Bowen: New Critical Perspectives* (pp.16-17) for the most recent considerations of critical responses to *Eva Trout*.

⁴⁸ Osborn contends that, in this sense, Bowen's work suffers the 'opposite problem' from Beckett's, whose critics, she argues, 'have often tended to ignore the manner in which...it also retains traces of th[e] norms' (2009, pp. 16-17). Osborn's remarks introduce Sinead Mooney's essay 'Unstable compounds: Bowen's Beckettian affinities' in *New Critical Perspectives*, pp. 13-33.

a matter of feeling. This is, perhaps, best demonstrated by Coates' reading of Hermione Lee's declaration that *Eva Trout* was a 'bizarre conclusion to [Bowen's] opus':

For Hermione Lee, Bowen's last novel's 'unhappy struggle with its own language and structure' records an 'almost unbearable present' with which the 'traditional novel of order and feeling' – the kind of writing Elizabeth Bowen excelled in – could no longer deal. *Eva Trout's* 'haphazard' plot and its patchy characterisation are put down to a belief that present conditions 'can no longer be mastered or even registered by our language'.⁴⁹

What is of interest to me here is that what Coates picks out from Lee's response to the novel is the sense that *Eva Trout's* transgressions are, in part, a transgression against an idea and order of feeling. According to Coates, the mistake critics make when reading *Eva Trout* is the insistence on reading Eva's wedding as a 'mock' one, which, in turn, mistakes real emotion, for fictional. Yet, whilst 'all' the critics he points to 'resolutely ignore the crucial and determining point' of the novel – that Eva's 'love for Henry Dancey is returned'⁵⁰ – it quickly becomes clear that in preserving the authenticity of love, Coates is staging an intervention not only in Bennett and Royle's 'deconstructionist account' of *Eva Trout*, but in the effects, and affects, of deconstruction itself.⁵¹

'Deconstructionists', Coates writes, 'have found that *Eva Trout's* supposed oddities of plot and characterisation may serve their desire to dissolve such tyrannical categories as theme, plot, recognisable personality and closure'.⁵² In order to read in *Eva Trout* these 'kaleidoscopic "convulsions"', such criticism allows an 'antipathy to considering the structure of the text or even a refusal to accept the notion of structure at

⁴⁹ Hermione Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen: An Estimation* (Vision Press: London, 1981), p 206. Cited in Coates, p. 59. Lee's discussion appears on page 198 of the revised edition.

⁵⁰ Coates, p. 60.

⁵¹ Maud Ellmann remarks that Coates' 'insistence on the ethical dimension of Bowen's work represents a powerful reproof against the growing tendency to treat her writings as poststructuralist *avant la lettre*' (Ellmann, p. 17).

⁵² Coates, p. 60.

all’⁵³ to override the ‘explicit’ moral resolution offered by Eva’s recognition that she not only loves but is loved in return. Coates is also, no doubt, responding to Bennett and Royle’s argument that, ‘despite the attempts of conventional criticism to read consolation into Bowen plots, these novels diverge from everything in or after modernism that might be identified with a “culture of redemption” ’.⁵⁴ Whilst Coates does not cite this passage, his arguments about the origins, and implications, of Bennett and Royle’s reading renders the consequences of such a reading in the strongest terms. Stemming from a ‘deliberate refusal’ to encounter the novel’s ‘individual moral terms’, ‘such determined mis-readings’ offer evidence of the critics’ ‘heavy intellectual, or emotional, investment in notions of incoherence and disorder’.⁵⁵ These readings demonstrate, he argues, ‘an instance of what Freadman and Miller have singled out as one of recent theorists’ “most disturbing and regrettable achievements” namely the elimination of “central ethical concerns and discourses” from the examination of literature’.⁵⁶ These, he argues, are the very moral impulses that lie, albeit without transparency, behind the ‘generalised anti-authoritarianism of critics opposed to “truth claims” or hierarchies of value as much as to characters or to plots’.⁵⁷ In the end, he suggests, this will suffer under its own ministrations, yet *Eva Trout*, he implies, will recuperate itself: in a conclusion that addresses those critics that agree with him, and seems to admonish those who do not, Coates argues that ‘Elizabeth Bowen’s stylistic elaboration, demanding a similar “attention of perusal”, bears the pressure of the

⁵³ Coates, p. 61.

⁵⁴ Bennett and Royle, p. xvii.

⁵⁵ Coates, p. 61.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 76. Coates cites Richard Freadman and Seumas Miller’s *Re-Thinking Theory: A Critique of Contemporary Literary Theory and an Alternative Account* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p 51.

⁵⁷ Coates, p. 76.

shifting complexities of a disturbing moral problem, that of the injuries done by the injured, and the complicity of the “innocent” in their own destruction’.⁵⁸

Coates unfolds a reading of *Eva Trout* that traces her character’s psychological development to its fruition in her learning to love. Though plagued by doubts about identity, personality, and reality itself, Eva is, although she dies, first brought to life by love: ‘When she learns that her love...is reciprocated, Eva for the first time sheds tears of joy. Eva dies having at last discovered she can arouse love where she herself loves. It is hard to see how the text could be more explicit’.⁵⁹ Eva’s tears, however, although explicit, are far from explicated by the text:

Something took place, a bewildering, brilliant, blurring, filling up, swimming and brimming over; then, not a torrent from the eyes but one, two, three, four tears, each hesitating, surprised to be where it was, then wandering down. The speediest splashed on to the diamond brooch. ‘Look what is *happening* to me!’ exulted Eva. She had no handkerchief, not having expected to require one – she blotted about on her face with a crunched-up glove. ‘What a coronation day...’

‘Are you happy?’ asked Henry, awed.

‘A coronation being living, today.’⁶⁰

Eva’s tears are a brimming over whose ‘coronation’, from the Latin ‘coruna’, ‘to crown’, marks a becoming that irreducibly overflows distinctions between birth or death, real or fictional, that all the acts of crowning caught up in this coronation might suggest. If Eva’s tears ‘crown’ a person, identity, self or interiority, it is as a commemoration, an emblem.⁶¹ Eva herself does not designate this ‘coronation’ into a lexicon or taxonomy of emotion or its signs (it is the narrator who calls them ‘tears’),

⁵⁸ Coates, p. 78.

⁵⁹ Coates, p. 60.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Bowen, *Eva Trout or Changing Scenes* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 267.

⁶¹ ‘Coronation’ is the ‘action of crowning’ and ‘the ceremony of investing...with a crown as an emblem of royal dignity’; the ‘crowning of a work; completion’ and is also the act of ‘designating articles produced to commemorate a particular coronation’. The sense of birth or becoming involved in a coronation is marked in the use of crowning to describe the moment during birth when the baby’s head doesn’t recede during contractions. See the OED Online entry and etymologies for ‘coronation’ and ‘crown’.

but offers, when asked if she is happy, an oblique, almost unreadable statement that registers what she had hitherto believed impossible: ‘A coronation being living, today’. Seeing her own tears, Eva’s coronation does not redeem by investing her with an authentic self that feels, but registers that she, unreal, lives; this ‘something happening’ does not release her from dissolution – it *is* a dissolution that is her coronation. Eva’s tears tear at the very ontological certainties with which they might console us.

Here we might consider Rei Terada’s remarks upon another tear that overfills the boundaries between reality and virtuality that emotion is supposed to confirm: replicant Sean Young’s remarkable human ‘tear’ in *Bladerunner* (1982).⁶² In an ‘explicitly sentimental moment’, Terada remarks, Sean discovers she is a replicant, one ‘whose memories are not her own’. Sean’s tears, Terada argues, do not shatter her non-subjectivity; she is still a replicant, a virtual human, but one who feels and whom ‘we assume...has had feelings before’. Terada contends that ‘the detective protagonist Deckert...realizes that subjectivity must go and emotion must stay’. Sean’s tears, most importantly, work by imploring us to read the very otherness they are supposed to undermine: seen by Sean, by Deckert, and, most importantly, by the film’s audience, ‘reserving the sight of her tears for this occasion dramatizes the fact that destroying the illusion of subjectivity does not destroy emotion, that on the contrary, emotion is the sign of the absence of that illusion’. Like Eva’s, Sean’s tears trace a ‘coronation being living, today’, intervening in the very geography of relations between subjectivity and emotion, reality and virtuality, that they invite.⁶³

Coates’ essay is no less performative and theatrical than the texts it critiques; not only does it detonate an emotionality from which it also sets itself apart, but,

⁶² See Terada, pp. 156-157. Because Terada’s remarks are restricted to a few lines this reference also cites the quotations from this passage that follow.

⁶³ Maud Ellmann’s discussion of Eva’s tears, which I will turn to later in this essay, attends to the problem of depth diagrammed by the virtual.

through its discussion of emotion, actualises the dissolutions it critiques. By advocating the redemptive qualities of love, Coates' essay, on the one hand, renders deconstruction 'insensitive' to emotion, or, more particularly, to the particularities of 'love'. At the same time, he subordinates emotion to analysis, aligning 'over-emotionality' with poor criticism. Those readings he critiques are marred by their 'heavy intellectual, or emotional, investment' in a 'notion' that is not 'in' the text but merely a product of this investment. What he calls 'deconstructionist readings' are incompatible with, and disproved by, love's redemption; this emotion is secure from the theatrical tendencies that 'drastically rewrite'⁶⁴ their objects of study. Invoking a dual language of, on the one hand, reification and, on the other, imbalance and critical impropriety, love is both objectified, and, in this contained form, elevated. This elevation makes it inaccessible to or outside deconstruction which, according to this argument, makes use of an abased form of love (perhaps the very narcissism Coates suggests Eva grows out of) to avoid engaging with the sticky issues raised by Coates' conception of emotion's apparently explicit reality. In this rather remarkable move, Coates does not locate emotion's redemptive stability, but enacts its discursivity.

Emotion scholars agree that feminist work has been largely responsible for not only developing the study of emotion into its multi-disciplinary renaissance but, more importantly, for legitimating it as an area of inquiry by attending to discourses of emotion⁶⁵ or, as Catherine Lutz's seminal work in the anthropology and sociology of emotion observes, the production of emotion through its rhetoric.⁶⁶ Lutz compares

⁶⁴ Coates, p. 61.

⁶⁵ This point is made by Terada, p. 8; Ahmed, p. 3; Opdahl, p. 193; Sedgwick, pp. 5-7, amongst others.

⁶⁶ 'Engendered Emotion: Gender, Power & The Rhetoric of Emotional Control in American Discourse' in Rom Harré and W. Gerrod Parrott (Eds.), *The Emotions: Social, Cultural and Biological Dimensions* (London: Sage, 1996), pp 151 – 170. See also Catherine Lutz, Theodore Schwartz and Geoffrey White (Eds.), *New Directions in Psychological Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993);

emotion, through Foucault, with sexuality, observing that both are dominated by bio-medical models, are commonly considered ‘universal, natural impulses’, accompanied by languages of management, such as distinctions between what is ‘healthy’ or ‘unhealthy’, and both are under ‘quasi-medical professions’.⁶⁷ Furthermore, clinical interventions in emotion deploy a rhetoric of control which not only ‘diverts attention from the socially constructed nature of the idea of emotion’ but simultaneously ‘reproduces emotion as irrational and other *and* elevates the status of the person who claims ability or need to control’; but the rhetoric of emotion ‘opposes the view of this other as dangerous when the rhetoric is reversed’.⁶⁸ Lutz cites this at work in, for example, twentieth-century child-rearing manuals, which, on the one hand, make ‘proper’ emotion the aim of the ideal mother, one who acts on her naturally healthy feminine feeling, whilst improper emotion – either an absence or excess of intimacy – threatens to stick to the child, contaminating them with their mother’s abnormality.⁶⁹ Bringing Lutz’s observations to bear on reading Bowen not only emphasises the extent to which Bowen’s fiction engages with these problems, but also points to the impossibility of distinguishing a discourse *about* emotion from discourses *of* emotion. As Coates’ essay helps us to observe, criticism is not only *not* exempt from emotion, but depends on it for its critical, and categorical, distinctions.

Lila Abu-Lughod and Catherine Lutz (Eds.), *Language and the Politics of Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and *Unnatural Emotions: Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll and their Challenge to Western Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). Lutz also co-wrote, with Geoffrey White, ‘The Anthropology of Emotions’ in *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15 (1986), pp.405-436, which, along with Lutz’s ‘Emotion, Thought, and Estrangement: Emotion as a Cultural Category’ in *Cultural Anthropology* 1(1986), pp.287-309, importantly recognised the study of emotion, in the social sciences, as an emerging area of research and advocated its significance to cultural theory. In addition to the essay in Harré and Parrott’s collection, Lutz’s work has been included in C. F. Graumann and K. J. Gergen (Eds.), *Historical Dimensions of Psychological Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and, more recently, in Jennifer Harding and E. Dierdre Pribram (Eds.), *Emotions: A Cultural Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2009). Unless otherwise noted, the following citations are from the Lutz’s essay in Harré and Parrott.

⁶⁷ C. Lutz, p. 153. In Chapter Four I discuss the work of Tom Lutz on tears; for this reason they are distinguished by their first initials.

⁶⁸ C. Lutz, p. 153.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

While I will go on in this thesis to argue that the intensity of Bowen's fictional acuties to ideas about emotion complicates a discursive or contextual account of her textual affects, I want to observe here that Lutz's work resonates with Bonnie Kime Scott's observations that 'gender' intersects 'modernism' through, in part, emotion.⁷⁰ Until more recently, Kime Scott observes, categorising modernist literatures has been dominated by an emphasis on 'experimental writing', which 'reinforces the need of the academy to be its interpreter and dismiss[es] traditions associated with women, activist agendas or mass culture'.⁷¹ It is precisely the gendering of 'mass culture as feminine' that makes the study of modernity always also gender study, argues Kime Scott: an important aspect of this is what Suzanne Clark elaborates as modernist 'anxieties over sentimental writing'.⁷² Clark cites Wyndham Lewis' use of 'sentimental' as the 'defining quality of all that the *Vortex* must reject...[the] domestic, romantic, Latin, abasement of intellectual as opposed to fashionable / cosmopolitan'⁷³ and observes that the 'manifestoes of the twentieth-century avant-garde made clear that the "sentimental" would be a target'.⁷⁴ In this way, Clark argues that 'sentimental', as used by modernist critics, 'repudiated and effectively silence[d] a whole generation of women writers by linking emotionalism to women – as if revolutionary poetry could only be intellectual, or by suggesting that women's continuity with nineteenth century conventions of

⁷⁰ See Bonnie Kime Scott (Ed.), *Gender in Modernism: New Geographies Complex Intersections* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007). Laura Marcus elaborates modernist anxieties about emotion in her introduction to *The Tenth Muse: Writing about Cinema in the Modernist Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). See Chapter Four of this thesis, which responds to some of Marcus' arguments through a discussion of Bowen's short fiction and the cinematic.

⁷¹ Kime Scott, p. 12.

⁷² Kime Scott, p. 15. Suzanne Clark's essay 'Sentimental Modernism' introduces texts that not only address these anxieties, but also accentuate their own productions of sentimentality as a response to it (in *Gender in Modernism: New Geographies Complex Intersections* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), pp.125-136).

⁷³ Clark, p. 126.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

narrative made them less than intellectually respectable'.⁷⁵ For Clark, the 'problem of the sentimental is a narrative of matricide' and she contends that the 'dismissive and uncritical use of the word "sentimental" continues to this day'.⁷⁶ Like Lutz's 'quasi-medical professions' Clark's observations link modernist aesthetics and literary criticism to a wider cultural preoccupation with and deployment of clinical discourses about emotion. This is at work in Floyd Dell's exhortation that feminism was at risk of being infected by 'sentimentalism':

Of all the corruptions to which the woman's movement is now open,...the most poisonous and permeating is that which flows from sentimentalism, and it is in the W.S.P.U. [Women's Social and Political Union] that sentimentalism is now rampant...It is this sentimentalism that is abhorrent to us. We fight it as we would fight prostitution, or any other social disease.⁷⁷

The language of contagion at work here is important, because it helps us to observe how the 'sentimental' does not so much locate a particular kind of emotion, but locates an anxiety about the effects (and consequences) of being identified *with* emotion that is associated with the feminine. Drawing on Clark's observations, then, the categorisation of the sentimental does not identify an inherent quality of feeling, but instead works to categorise emotion by producing certain emotions *as* sentimental, as if to contain emotion's threat. Designating the 'sentimental' then does not name a discourse, but instead enables the modernist writer and critic to establish a distance from that being designated as sentimental. This distance works by differentiating between the 'wrong' kind of emotion, which should be distinguished and set apart from the 'right' emotion to be celebrated or identified with. It also draws out that 'modernisms'⁷⁸ developed

⁷⁵ Clark, p. 125.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 129.

⁷⁷ Floyd Dell, *Women as World Builders* (1913), pp.98-99, quoted in Clark, p. 127.

⁷⁸ Peter Nicholls' term is important here not only because, as I will go on to explore, Bowen's short fiction corroborates Nicholls' concern by troubling the teleology of a modernist aesthetic that might be at

their aesthetic arguments, engagements, and dialogues, in part, by discerning between those emotions to be eliminated, like waste, and those to be valued, and preserved.⁷⁹

What I want to emphasise here is how these discussions help us to consider some of the critical moves that intersect to do so: particular emotions, or categories of emotions, are distinguished; the manner of distinguishing positions these emotions in relation to the constituents of that discourse; these emotions are allocated differing levels of intensity and complexity which, in turn, corroborates not only the level of interest they have for that discourse, but their accessibility to that discourse's capacity to either read or represent them. Ideologies of emotion, as Terada observes, tend to under-represent its complexity⁸⁰, so that even the most elevated emotion, that which is most difficult to understand and least accessible to a range of interpretive methods, will in the end be explicable. Such an emotion's very resistance to other discourses or modes becomes evidence of the expertise that reads and represents it.

While Coates' essay demonstrates what we might, through Terada, observe as the 'ideological convenience of casting emotion as a basis for naturalized social or moral consensus'⁸¹, I want to suggest then that it also extends this to the kinds of consensus involved in periodisation and aesthetic categorisation. Coates is certainly not the first critic to describe Bowen's writing in terms of its emotion, and, certainly, ideologies of emotion are enfolded into the traditions of realism and manners associated

work in what Nicholls' calls the 'monolithic' implied by 'Modernism' (p. 1), but also because I want to highlight here that Nicholls' move to distinguish various 'modernisms' at work, rather than *a* Modernism, finds fruition by observing distinctions about emotion at work in and between these modernisms (see Nicholls' chapter 'At a Tangent: Other Modernisms' in *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 1995), pp.193-222).

⁷⁹ The correspondences between gender, excess, and sentiment observed by Kime Scott and her contributors draws emotion into her argument that 'while Gertrude Stein may celebrate a proliferation of literary excrescences, waste is coded feminine when Ezra Pound edits Eliot, or Thorsten Veblen identifies non-productive aspects of a capitalist economy' (Kime Scott, p. 13). Kime Scott's examples refer to Tim Armstrong's *Modernism, Technology and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) which incorporates discussions of emotion into his consideration of the aesthetics of the body and relationships between literary and material technologies.

⁸⁰ Terada, p. 3.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 4.

with those criticisms that find in Bowen the conventional. For Hermione Lee, Bowen's openness to such criticisms comes in the form of her 'emotional plots', a literary preoccupation with school-girl crushes and sensational storylines.⁸² In her defence of Bowen, Lee urges us to see that these 'are about more than the deaths of individual hearts or private worlds of love': they make a 'modern critique' and their 'intense, witty, evocative treatment of personal behaviour and feeling is also an analysis of a "disinherited" society in a period of loss and diminishment'.⁸³ Bowen's 'emotional plots' registers in Lee's discussion precisely the kinds of work I have suggested 'emotion' performs in critical discourses. Lee's rationale for her study begins to point to the extent to which these are at work in the critical history of Bowen's writing; but it also speaks to the severity of critical anxiety that can accompany advocating for a writer interested in the wrong kinds of emotion:

I wanted, in this book, to make clear what a significant, dramatic, interesting historical narrative her fictions make. I was anxious to rescue her from being identified 'only' with personal and emotional concerns. I didn't want her to be diminished as a woman's novelist, inhabiting only private spaces. One way of doing this was to give her her rightful place in literary history, to look at the reading and the influences that lay behind her writing.⁸⁴

Bowen's writing thus presents, for Lee, a 'central paradox': 'a satirical self-awareness superimposed on a sensation-hungry romanticism'.⁸⁵ Lee goes on to gather a series of observations from Bowen scholarship that contrasts the interest in emotion suggested by Bowen's plots with detachment, self-awareness, and impersonality. It is as if these might allow us to distinguish a more publicly and culturally interesting, and politically

⁸² Lee, p. 3. Shannon Wells-Lassagne elaborates this supposition in a recent essay where she suggests that Bowen criticism has glossed over the inter-textual relations her writing has with sensationalist fiction because of the threat such relations would have posed to assuring 'her place as a serious writer' ('She-ward bound': Elizabeth Bowen as a sensationalist writer' in Susan Osborn (Ed.), *Elizabeth Bowen: New Critical Perspectives* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2009), pp. 96-112, p. 96).

⁸³ Lee, p. 3.

⁸⁴ Lee, p. 2.

⁸⁵ Lee, *MT*, p. 6.

charged, Bowen.⁸⁶ Rather than secure Bowen's 'rightful place', however, I want to suggest that these distinctions destabilise the very historical, literary and critical boundaries they imply, and that *Eva Trout* threatens to disrupt.

In their 2005 collection of essays 'Impersonality and Emotion in Twentieth-Century British Literature', Christine Reynier and Jean-Michel Ganteau suggest that twentieth century literature and criticism revolve around 'impersonality' and 'emotion' as categories; attention to these 'enable[s] us to re-read modernist and postmodernist texts'.⁸⁷ Postmodernism, they argue, is defined against emotion, an 'impersonal literary game deprived of emotion, artificial and indulging in self-reflexivity'.⁸⁸ Investigating the relationship between emotion and impersonality thus 'sends readers back'⁸⁹ to modernist writers. Yet in doing so, Reynier and Ganteau encounter a kind of critical knot, where emotion is not only defined against impersonality but also formulated out of it. Reynier and Ganteau's encounter articulates the kinds of paradoxes and problems emotion begins to present to contemporary literary critics. Modernism is, they observe, on the one hand, 'defined as an art of indirection...an impersonal art...a reaction against Victorian sentimentality and representational writing...non-figurative and anti-representational', but it is simultaneously 'an art of subjectivity, hence of what's most

⁸⁶ For example, Lee cites Declan Kiberd's reading of Bowen's '[i]mperviousness...to feeling' as 'distinctively if uncomfortably Anglo-Irish' (Lee, p. 3). For Kiberd's discussion of the feeling of Bowen's writing see 'Elizabeth Bowen – The Dandy in Revolt' in *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), pp. 364-379. Lee also points to the 'detachment' in Bowen's writing that Phyllis Lassner reads as a politically powerful representation of the 'emotional paralysis of women constricted within domestic and maternal roles' (Lee, p. 9); the inability to feel forms her female characters 'against the literary and social traditions which have been responsible for their development' (Lee, p. 12). My reading of Lee's discussion is not to suggest Lee is unaware of the discursivity of such readings, in fact her chapter 'A Form of Experience' explicitly addresses the politics of gender and class involved in critical responses to Bowen that 'condescended to her for domestic concerns and emotionalism' (p. 225).

⁸⁷ Christine Reynier and Jean-Michel Ganteau (Eds.), 'Impersonality and Emotion in Twentieth-Century British Literature' in *Present Perfect* (1) (Université Paul-Valéry: Publications du Montpellier III, 2005), pp. 11-16, p. 15. The journal of British aesthetics *Present Perfect* was launched with this edition, which gathers together papers originally presented in 2003 and 2004 at conferences held at the Université Paul-Valéry-Montpellier III.

⁸⁸ Reynier and Ganteau, p. 15.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

personal or human; an art focusing on the self, desire, feeling and emotion'.⁹⁰ For the editors, this presents 'contradictory visions of modernism' as either 'impersonal, aloof, elitist and highbrow' or with the 'emotional power' articulated by Eliot's impersonal aesthetic emotion.⁹¹ And yet, they argue, if impersonality and the eventual death of the author and the subject come to characterise first modernist and later post-modernist writing, how do we make sense of Eliot's 'radical personality' that makes impersonality the 'locus of personal emotion'?⁹² If 'impersonality' is what leads to powerful emotion, they ask, is this 'undone by the author's choice of words; is personal emotion reintroduced or transmitted in choice of language? Isn't there a connection between "artists" emotion and "aesthetic emotion"?'⁹³ Such questions, they note, are important: 'we read the modernists...because they transmit emotion'.⁹⁴ For Reynier and Ganteau, these contradictory notions of impersonality and emotion divide questions of authorial intent and the status of the text and go to the heart of twentieth century literature, theory and criticism:

Since [Eliot], literary criticism seems to have been caught in the same mesh of contradiction: the theses of the early Barthes about 'The Death of the author,' of the anti-intentionalists like W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, of the New Critics have been contradicted by those of Foucault, the later Barthes and even more recent ones. If we agree....that post-structuralist criticism is 'primarily a discourse of and about modernism' to such a degree that it can be seen 'as a theory of modernism,' how can such theories, which are so much at variance with each other, help us apprehend modernist British literature?⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Reynier and Ganteau, p. 12.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 12.

⁹² Ibid, p. 13.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 14.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.13. Reynier and Ganteau cite Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide, Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 1986), p. 207.

At stake in this, they suggest, is the critical capacity of post-modern theoretical and literary discourses to cohere around an emphasis on this 'lack of emotion'. Reynier and Ganteau argue that this capacity begins to be undermined by its own interest in self-reflexivity. They ask: '...isn't self-reflexivity a sign of the return of the author and therefore, of what's most personal to him/her, and first of all of his/her emotions?...We may therefore wonder whether, in the aftermath of Fredric Jameson's famous commentary on the 'waning of affect,' the lack of emotion in contemporary literature should be taken for granted'.⁹⁶

I want to return to the assumption that emotion is grounded in (or grounds) the 'personal subject', however an important point emerges from Reynier and Ganteau's discussion to do with the kinds of geographies that emotion is supposed to prove, and that I am arguing Bowen's textual affect troubles. Observing that an 'attention to impersonality and how it precludes or, on the contrary, foregrounds emotion'⁹⁷ sends us forward, into the post-modern, Reynier and Ganteau remark that it also reads us backwards. Changing theoretical orientations to, or distinctions about, emotion, they suggest, indexes an inability to accommodate emotion which is, at the same time, still present. This persistence of emotion is read as a resistance to theory, one which asks us to redefine our categorisations of both twentieth century literature and critical theory:

Since critics like Barthes have contradicted themselves or at least come back on their first sayings; since Eliot's theory of impersonality is either riddled with contradictions or can be interpreted in various ways...we may try to revise, in the light of these two multi-faceted notions of impersonality and emotion, the canonical definitions of modernist and post-modernist literature or at least come back to the critical tools forged to apprehend them as well as to the contradictions or dark zones in our knowledge of this literature.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Reynier and Ganteau, p. 15.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p.14.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 15.

Through attention to these ‘dark zones’, impersonality comes to be twinned with emotion – implicated even when absent: ‘...in a body of texts that reputedly favour such impersonal practices as ludic overkill and in which meta-fictional games and the ascendance of inter-textuality have come to assume full hegemony, there appears to be room left for emotion’.⁹⁹ What Reynier and Ganteau identify is an aspect of emotion’s ‘secrecy’, how it might be thought of as both everywhere and nowhere in the literatures and criticism of the twentieth century, a slippery movement that challenges our critical and literary conceptions of, and perhaps investments in, what it *is* to *be* modern or postmodern: ‘the debate on postmodernism has taken many unexplored and divergent paths, and that what some critics have seen as the prevalence of the ludic, the gratuitously metafictional, the overtly intertextual has also been commented on as the locus of the apocalyptic, of the sublime and of the ethical’.¹⁰⁰

Reynier and Ganteau’s observations suggest some of the ways emotion is discussed without being identified, even, or I would suggest especially, when occluded by impersonality. Reynier and Ganteau observe that ‘what emerges is the trace of a perennial tradition: that which concomitantly revives the impersonal practices of intertextual ventriloquism, for instance, the better to solicit the reader’s emotional return to the past....that which calls forth the metafictional conventions of the early novel to protest the impossibility of impersonality’.¹⁰¹ Returning to emotion not only links the modern and postmodern, but returns them to the ‘traditions’ with which they supposedly break, yet such that the constitutive terms of these are no longer stable:

What thus appears in the contemporary practice of impersonality, in a production that has been doxically referred to as ‘postmodern,’ is a special interpretation of the prefix ‘post’ as meaning less ‘against’ than ‘continuous with’ modernism. In other terms, the contemporary

⁹⁹ Reynier and Ganteau, p. 15.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

reader is presented with no less than a vision of tradition that echoes Eliot's in more ways than just one while positing a radical and flexible adaptation of the relations both differentiating and uniting impersonality – or the impossibility thereof – and emotion. The postmodern is thus seen as a return to the modern and, beyond, to the romantic (*pace* Eliot) and onwards to the baroque (enter the metaphysical poets again)...¹⁰²

What I want to agree with, here, is that revisiting distinctions between emotion and impersonality has important destabilising effects on the temporalities a genealogy of literary criticism and theory might describe. But I disagree with Reynier and Ganteau's insistence on casting emotion as proof of the 'impossibility of impersonality' by delineating that *contradictory* categories of emotion *or* impersonality, or emotion *and* impersonality, identify a persistent irruption of the personal subject whose critical presence undoes what Reynier and Ganteau call the post-modern 'lack of emotion'. Their argument hinges on observing, rightly, that emotion persists: this persistence then produces a tension or critical lacunae whose presence *counters* the latest (or, given the timing of their essay, the late twentieth century) version of impersonality in the death of the subject. Reynier and Ganteau's remarks cast emotion as theory's undermining point; that emotion persists counters a project that does away with the personal subject that grounds emotion.

By implying that this theoretical climate cannot or does not accommodate or account for emotion and is uninterested in it, however, Reynier and Ganteau repeat one of the narratives about emotion that tends to dominate rationales for the study of emotion since about the 1970s onward, and which this project seeks to interrupt.¹⁰³ I

¹⁰² Reynier and Ganteau, p. 16. See my discussion in Chapter Four which examines Bowen's intertextualities of feeling and their temporal fold.

¹⁰³ This is precisely one of the aspects of the history of emotion that Rei Terada observes when she emphasises her disagreement with feminist criticism 'before about 1990' (8). Terada notes that this criticism tends to diagram at best a lack of interest in, at worst a denigration of, emotion within philosophy. Underlying Terada's argument, however, is the observation that emotion actually 'tends...to

disagree with Reynier and Ganteau and instead argue that the story of twentieth-century literature and criticism they tell does not indicate emotion's absence from this thinking, but suggests that a discussion of the impersonal *treats* emotion, precisely by keeping it under cover. It is not attending to emotion as opposed to the more recent preoccupation with impersonality that 'sends us back', but observing that 'impersonality' is not opposed to emotion. Instead, an aesthetic of 'impersonality' is a critical discourse about emotion that distinguishes between emotions, generates particular currencies of feeling for those emotions identified with 'impersonality' and 'unemotionality', diagrams a distance from or proximity to those categories, and naturalises the distinctions it is supposed to indicate.

The aesthetic discriminations Reynier and Ganteau describe index a twinning of critical and clinical discourses of emotion that, as Lutz and Clark help us to observe, turn around the notions of discerning emotion, or distinguishing between emotions, so that it or these may be mobilised. Brian Parkinson observes that 'functional theories' of emotion are those that ask what emotion is *for*¹⁰⁴; what Reynier and Ganteau's invitation to look back draws out is an ideology of emotion that entangles a profound critical investment in the presupposition that emotion has a purpose, with a clinical

occupy a high place in classical models of subjectivity' (8). Pointing to the difficulty the 'passions' presents Descartes' dichotomy between the 'brain' and 'body', she argues that the pineal gland, where he locates the passions, provides the capacity to 'literalize the internal difference the passions make and the double edge of their location. Kicked upstairs with the thinking soul, passions are both circumscribed and dangerous. This kind of move is far more common than hostility to emotion as such: philosophy vies with emotion by elevating it, not by slighting it' (9). It is this model of containment and reification that is at work in my discussion of Coates. One of the implications of Terada's observation is that, taking her discussion of Descartes as an example, we cannot locate the history of emotion only in the particular kind of emotion a discourse takes as its object, but the very distinction that discourse makes between emotions. Although I agree with Terada that this narrative tends to be somewhat more complicated after 1990, particularly in the humanities, the level of complexity attributed to the history or study of emotion is, still, very much dependent on the discipline or field from which one approaches it; this is, itself, one way of thinking about the ideology of any given genealogy of emotion theory or inquiry.

¹⁰⁴ See Brian Parkinson's *Ideas and Realities of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 1995) for one of the most comprehensive reviews of nineteenth and twentieth century debates about emotion in relation to psychological accounts of emotion. Parkinson delineates functional theories as interested in the 'function rather than the structure of the psychological system' (146).

investment in stabilising and containing emotion so that it can be deployed. That emotion needs to be ‘for’ something belies an anxiety about being able to define emotion. The fluidity of emotion here is crucial, because it is what makes mobilising emotion possible *and* what threatens the integrity of the discourse that mobilises it. This very fluidity, however, suggests that emotion always threatens to ‘stick’, just as it also is not contained by our taxonomies or critical frames for speaking about it. Observing that it is the very ways emotion exceeds critical consensus that has been a ‘sticking point’ for emotion’s thinkers, Sara Ahmed also reminds us, elsewhere, that what ‘sticks’ is disgusting. From ‘bad-taste’¹⁰⁵, disgust, I suggest, shares an intimacy with the aesthetic distinctions for which literary theory and criticism have a ‘taste’. My interest in disgust, then, is that it helps us consider how the distinction between emotion and impersonality, differentiation between various emotions, and the reification of some emotions as more interesting or productive for criticism and theory, work through critical disgust. Critical discourses about emotion, I am suggesting, are also discourses of disgust.¹⁰⁶

Recent studies of disgust disagree about the extent to which disgust has interested, or failed to interest, literary and cultural theory and criticism. Winnifred

¹⁰⁵ See OED Online entry for disgust. See Ahmed, p. 4 and pp. 82-83.

¹⁰⁶ At stake in this is the ability to distinguish the ‘critical’ act from the ‘emotional’. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points to Silvan Tomkins’s theorisation of affect as kinds of ‘interest’ to suggest that emotions might be thought of as on continuums of ‘interest’ or ‘un-interest’ and, I would suggest ‘disinterest’. Kosofsky Sedgwick suggests that disgust, contempt and shame all involve the establishment of distances from interest or attraction, yet the ‘establishing’ of this distance also, as we can see through Ahmed’s work on disgust, belies proximity. This boundary work is what Kosofsky Sedgwick observes characterises Tomkins’ work on disgust, contempt, and shame because they work to ‘punctuate the system as distinct’ (Kosofsky Sedgwick, p. 116). This capacity is what Kosofsky Sedgwick suggests makes shame the ‘exemplary affect for theory’ (p. 115). That these affects work to discern, differentiate or distinguish, operating at the level of digitization, leads Kosofsky Sedgwick via Tomkins to argue that *theory itself* comes from shame theory, from the shared act or event of ‘partially or temporarily specify[ing] a domain’ (p. 116). While for Kosofsky Sedgwick the distinction between shame and disgust is that shame never ‘renounces its object cathexis’ (p. 117), the relationship between aesthetics and theory in literary criticism and theory suggests that in this context shame and disgust seep into one another. For Silvan Tomkins’ work see *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 4 Vols. (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2008).

Menninghaus's *Disgust: Theory and History of Disgust* locates an accumulation of tropes, images and aesthetics of disgust across literary and cultural theory that seems to gather force in the twentieth century. Sianne Ngai argues, however, that, even when it is explicitly the object of interest, 'disgust' tends to be overshadowed by 'desire': 'the striking asymmetry between the careers of disgust and desire in literary and cultural theory raises the broader question of why repulsion has such a long history of being overshadowed by attraction as a theoretical concern'.¹⁰⁷ What these two studies share, however, is that they locate the work of disgust only in an interest *in* disgust – thus they debate the extent to which textual 'objects' (theory, criticism, literature) that *are* identified *as* disgusting prove an intensity of interest, or dis-interest, in disgust. But, as Sara Ahmed observes, disgust works to locate, and thus contain, or identify, that which is perceived as disgusting. Disgust is not located in an object, but at work in the designation of an object *as* disgusting; if we want to observe disgust, it is at work in the *distinctions* between what is and is not disgusting.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ See Winnifred Menninghaus's *Disgust: Theory and History of a Strong Sensation* (New York: State University of New York (SUNY) Press, 2003). Sianne Ngai remarks that even the 'theory of abjection at the heart of Julie Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*' is 'eventually reconceptualised in the libidinal terms of "want," "primal repression," and self-shattering *jouissance*' ('Afterword: on disgust' in *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2005), pp. 332-353, p.332). Ngai's account, however, not only insists on a distinction between disgust and desire, but also that disgust *does* secure, by policing, the borders of the 'subjective-objective' boundary (335). But Ahmed's arguments, particularly her discussion of terrorism, remind us that 'policing' always undoes the security it might signify. Disgust is, along with shame, currently of critical interest. In *On Disgust* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 2004), Aurel Kolnai offers a phenomenological account of disgust and its moral objects. Susan Miller's *Disgust: The Gatekeeper Emotion* (London: Routledge, 2004) offers an account of disgust's role in establishing boundaries. In *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), Martha Nussbaum argues against grounding a legal ethics in disgust. Darwin's account of disgust in F. Darwin (Ed.), *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: John Murray, 1904) continues to be of interest for the ways it iterates the relationship between disgust and taste, which forms the basis of Ahmed's discussion (Ahmed, p. 269).

¹⁰⁸ Ahmed, p. 86. Ahmed's discussion responds to Kristeva's observation that abjection is bound up with ontological insecurity. Transforming the boundary into an object 'seeks to secure 'the not' through the response of being disgusted; this 'not' that is 'that which opposes the I' is the abject (*Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. L.S.Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 3). Ahmed's discussion seeks to elaborate *how* the borders, in abjection, are 'transformed into an object' (Ahmed, p. 86; see Kristeva, p. 4).

¹⁰⁸ See Ahmed, pp. 82-91.

Disgust involves a ‘contact zone’ of simultaneous attraction and repulsion. This oscillation between proximity and distance is crucial to the making of borders that, appearing to thicken into an object that keeps bodies apart and corroborates this separation, still continues to read the ‘inter-corporeality’ of the disgust encounter. Disgust involves a persistent clinging, or sticking, of the disgusting that contours the ‘I’, the ‘subject’, or the ‘body’ that has been distinguished. Therefore while William Ian Miller observes that ‘the sticky and disgusting have been linked, if not reduced to each other’¹⁰⁹, Ahmed notes that not everything that sticks or clings is disgusting: instead, stickiness becomes disgusting only when the integrity of the subject is at stake. What is disgusting is that which, in threatening to stick to us, threatens the order of inside and out – it is not, as Sarah Ahmed points out, what ‘has got inside us’ but what is both inside and outside us – this ‘turns us out, as well as outside in’.¹¹⁰

Because Ahmed doesn’t locate disgust *in* what is designated as disgusting, but considers it as something closer to an event or encounter, her study is able to show how the circulations and movements of disgust can be at work in establishing communities, political bodies, and I would suggest the kinds of intellectual, critical, and aesthetic bodies suggested by Reynier and Ganteau’s discussion. Once disgust encounters are acknowledged to exceed those situations where the ‘property’ of disgust is readily identifiable, as they must be if we are to understand disgust in political and cultural contexts, disgust suggests a history of reading.¹¹¹ Rather than derive from inherent

¹⁰⁹ William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997), p. 26.

¹¹⁰ See Ahmed, pp. 82-91.

¹¹¹ Psychological studies of disgust tend to rely on either images, sounds, or scenarios that dramatise bodily functions, fluids and smells, or scenarios that are easily associated with disgust. For an example of this see Sarah Marzillier, and Graham Davey’s ‘Anxiety and disgust: Evidence for a unidirectional relationship’ in *Cognition & Emotion* 19: 5 (2005), pp.729-750. My own experience of participating in disgust experiments at the University of Sussex confirmed Ahmed’s observations by deploying methodologies that involved attaching ‘offensive’ properties to an ‘offensive body’. For example I was

disgusting properties, the disgust encounter involves reading a contact with what has previously been in contact with (or could be anticipated as coming in contact with) what is associated with or designated as disgusting. In this sense ‘disgust’ always doubles with interpretation and cannot be extracted from it.¹¹² Rather than understand it as an emotion that names or identifies how one feels about an object that ‘is’ disgusting, then, disgust is the interpretive event that constitutes an object as disgusting and this constitution involves a reading of the past and possible contacts that the encounter might also put one into contact with. Reynier and Ganteau’s discussion elaborates an accumulation of distinctions about emotion and discernments between emotions that registers the very kinds of border-work Ahmed attributes to disgust.¹¹³ What has stuck out for them from the narratives about emotion and impersonality in twentieth-century literature and criticism is that emotion sticks around, despite ‘impersonality’ and despite ‘the death of the subject’. This, they argue, requires us to rethink our theoretical investment in these ideas, and ‘return’ to emotion, which opposes these. By re-reading the distinction between ‘emotion’ and ‘lack of emotion’, ‘personality’ and ‘impersonality’ as a discourse of critical disgust, however, these distinctions are denaturalised and we can see how they work as reciprocal relations of

asked to rate my level of disgust if a homeless woman smelling of urine sat next to me on a bus. I was not asked to rate my disgust if I were to come into contact with an affluent body that smelled of urine.

¹¹² See Ahmed, pp. 96-100, for a discussion of terrorism. Rather importantly, Ahmed’s observation offers a useful challenge to Ngai’s arguments that disgust is never ambivalent about its object by observing that disgust can involve ‘loops’ (for example ‘disgust can involve disgust at what disgust effects as a form of collective existence’) that make it extremely difficult to discern what, precisely, disgust takes as its ‘object’ (99). What Ahmed reminds us is that regardless of what disgust appears to ‘take’ as an object, its work is to make this an object that can be read as disgusting. In this way disgust always implicates they, or that, which is disgusted.

¹¹³ The kinds of border work involved here in criticism and theory might be one way of thinking about the ethical imperatives of style that Terry Eagleton observes is at stake in Theodor Adorno’s ‘practice of writing’: ‘In order to do justice to the qualitative moments of the thing, thought must thicken its own texture, grow gnarled and close-grained; but in doing so it becomes a kind of object in its own right, sheering off from the phenomenon it hoped to encircle. As Theodor Adorno remarks: “the consistency of its performance, the density of its texture, helps the thought to miss the mark”...Adorno has a kind of running solution to this dilemma, and that is style. What negotiates this contradiction is the crabbed, rebarbative practice of writing itself, a discourse pitched into a constant state of crisis’ (Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1990), p.341).

sanitization and expulsion, ejection and containment rather than proof of different critical or aesthetic categories. The ‘zone of contact’ between these distinctions reads emotion both as a threat to the integrity of the ‘bodies’ that make these distinctions and the slippage, or slipperiness, that might enable a critical body to cohere. Emotion disgusts, as Jean-Paul Sartre writes of ‘slime’, because ‘it is a fluidity which holds me and which compromises me’.¹¹⁴ It is the promise of a critical, aesthetic, and theoretical ‘body’ that I am suggesting emotion compromises in the discussions Reynier and Ganteau review. As Elizabeth Grosz points out, what is disgusting is so ‘only given the maintenance of an order of things which allows absorption to become threatening’.¹¹⁵

Coates’ reading of love and Eva’s tears of joy, then, mobilises the discourses of contamination, containment and sanitization involved in disgust. For love to work for his argument, it must be contained and managed, handled in such a way that the *argument* about emotion sticks but *emotion* doesn’t. Instead, undifferentiated emotion, emotion that can’t be put to use (the excessive emotion of the ‘over-emotional’, dysfunctional emotion), is identified as contaminating not only the critical reading with which he disagrees, but its entire critical project. *Still Lives* argues *Eva Trout* is a ‘slippery fish’ that slips away from us everything we believe about what it means to be real – as *Eva Trout* remarks, ‘[a]nyhow, what a slippery fish is identity; and what *is* it, besides a slippery fish?’ (193):

The sliding of the phrase ‘slippery fish’ into the questioning of identity activates the polysemic references to fish which slip through the text and swallow up not only our certitude of Eva’s identity as ‘realistic’, but also, in a very deep sense, the very possibility of identity. The slipperiness of Eva’s name entails the slipperiness of

¹¹⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. H.E. Barnes (Routledge: London, 1996). In *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*, trans. P. Mairet (Methuen and Co.: London, 1962), Sartre elaborates a theory of emotion as ‘magical transformations’ of the world that intersects and challenges judgement and appraisal theories of emotion in interesting ways.

¹¹⁵ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 194.

identity and of language....In order to suggest the lubricious and even demonic force of 'Eva Trout', we might speak rather of an imperson.¹¹⁶

It is these consequences of 'imperson'-ating Eva, however, that Coates' is concerned about: to get hold of the novel's slipperiness he tries to get hold of the stability of emotion and, through it, secure the very 'order of things' that these dissolutions threaten to absorb. What he catches, however, is not love, or the novel, but emotion's slipperiness, in the dissolving effects of Eva's tears. For, just as Bowen's texts 'stray across boundaries and resist neat identifications'¹¹⁷, such 'shiftiness turns out to be characteristic of emotion'.¹¹⁸

Eva's 'brimming' and Bowen's 'sheer gush' intersect emotion and Bowen's writing in a fluid dynamics that registers Zoltán Kövecses observation of emotion's 'force'.¹¹⁹ Emotion language, he observes, never simply reports or indicates emotion. It is, instead, always metaphorical. Our languages about emotion, however, lack consistency: metaphors of emotion do not stabilize an origin, direction, intensity, or density of emotion. What qualifies emotion will differ across metaphors for different emotions, but it also differs between references to what is supposed to be the same emotion. What emotion metaphors share, however, is that they describe emotion 'as force': this force affords 'materiality' a specific dynamic. Whether described as a fluid in a container, an explosion, a pressure, a gripping, a burning, or a spilling, the dynamic of emotion's force not only designates the limit, and integrity of that limit, to the

¹¹⁶ Bennett and Royle, p. 152. Maud Ellmann discusses the 'kettle of fish' at work in the figures of fish and fishiness in *Eva Trout* (pp. 220-221).

¹¹⁷ Osborn, 2007, p. 228.

¹¹⁸ Terada, p. 61.

¹¹⁹ See Kövecses, 'The Force of Emotion' and 'Emotions and Relationships' in Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphors and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 87-113; 114-138. Bennett and Royle's discussions of 'thermo-writing' in *A World of Love* might be thought of as registering the extent to which Bowen's novels generate this force (see 'Obelisk' in *Still Lives*, pp. 104-120).

materiality it conceptualises, but also corroborates the positionality or relationality of that materiality to its context. Emotion's 'force', then, materializes that material whose capacity to affect and be affected it also designates, and reinforces. Emotion doesn't originate from the materiality whose substance it makes possible, nor is it outside this: it constitutes and dissolves these distinctions.

Because individual emotion metaphors 'point' to emotion everywhere and nowhere, these do not cohere around a location or origin for emotion but instead work to differently substantiate emotion as a movement or force that materializes not only what it acts on, with, against, or through, but at the same time designates the capacity of that material to act. The emotion that is referred to thus appears to brace the epistemic, ontological, and conceptual effects of the relationality to which its metaphor refers. Vital to this is that the density or intensity of the effects that an emotion metaphor describes is passed to the 'emotion' rather than the 'theory' (folkloric or otherwise) of what that emotion does, which is produced in place of emotion.

This suggests that our thinking about emotion needs to inflect a dimensionality that does not locate emotion only in a linear sequence, or even a circuit of cause and reaction, and that does not ascribe to its contracture or stilling, the inertia of a state. That emotion metaphors conceptualize emotion not just as force, but often as the 'force, event or object that leads to emotion in the first place'¹²⁰ helps us to observe the difficulty with ascribing a temporal, material or representational boundedness to emotion. While studies of emotion rely on being able to point to and indicate emotion, Kövecses' observations remind us that it is our representations of emotion that produce what we interpret as emotion – and these representations gain their effect by referring to other potential representations, not by indicating a 'real' emotion that pre-exists the

¹²⁰ Kövecses, p. 64.

representation. As Brian Parkinson, who theorises emotion as ‘online communication’, remarks, studies of emotion in ‘real life’ are characterized by methodologies flawed by their presupposition

...that our minds contain more or less accurate knowledge about emotions which can be conveyed...by language. Thus self-reports are the key empirical measure of emotion, and studies of the meanings of emotion words and concepts remain the most popular way of understanding how real emotions are different from, or similar to, one another...The traditional approach to emotion representation, then, assumes that what people say about emotion....gives as good information as it is possible to get about the deep structure of emotion experience itself. According to this view, there is a simple and unidirectional descriptive connection between emotional reality and emotion representation.¹²¹

What makes emotion ‘online’, in Parkinson’s view, is that emotion does not pre-exist the interpretive contexts in which it happens, and yet it is also never not happening.¹²²

For Parkinson, the ‘reality’ of emotion is not a state that is then indicated by representation. Instead, he argues that representation ‘should be seen as right at the heart of emotion rather than as indirect indices of an underlying state. All that emotion is, in many circumstances, is a particular form of communication’.¹²³ What Parkinson makes clear, however, is that ‘communication’ should not be confused with ‘transmission’ (which he notes is ‘one of the cornerstones of cognitive theory’), because this assumes that the ‘private’ emotional experience is first encoded ‘within’ the individual, transmitted, and then ‘decoded’ by the receiver.¹²⁴ Instead, emotion

¹²¹ Parkinson, p. 288.

¹²² As Rei Terada remarks, ‘specific emotions appear and disappear...but there is no such thing as the absence of emotion. Emotions arise from others’ subsidence, from reflection on emotions, and from the very absence of any particular thing to feel’ (13). Here post-structuralism finds an unexpected ally with neuroscience, through Antonio Damasio’s discussions of ‘background feeling’. Damasio argues that emotion is at work not only ‘in’ or ‘during’ those ‘states’ we designate as *being emotional*, but between them as ‘background feeling’; this, I would suggest, is part of the ‘fluid dynamic’ of emotion. For Damasio’s discussion see *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (New York: Quill, 1994). See also n.123 of this chapter.

¹²³ Parkinson, p. 170.

¹²⁴ Ibid, pp. 173-175.

involves a complexity of mediations – adjustments, responses, and hypotheses – that reverberate with and interpret each other. Emotion is not *in* the specific moment we ‘capture’ in facial expression studies, for example, but constituted by ‘reading’ this moment in relation to what has, or might have happened right before, after, or alongside it. Parkinson observes that in order to begin to approximate ‘decoding’ a ‘simple’ encounter, it would be necessary ‘to record 10,000 bits of information every second to give an accurate picture’.¹²⁵ Emotion, Parkinson argues, is not passed between interactants as an exchange of information, instead emotion is the communication *of* emotional communication: ‘it is not necessarily emotion *per se* that is communicated when we pick up information from other people’s verbal and nonverbal behaviour. Rather we coordinate ourselves to what they do and somewhere along the line emotion occurs between us or is attributed by one of us to the other or to ourself’.¹²⁶ This attribution is generated from prior emotion encounters. Hardly unimportant or inauthentic, these attributions are also what determine the possibility of emotion. Parkinson’s thinking about emotion as ‘online’ generates a theory of emotion whose ‘reality’ is always virtual, and whose presence is always in place of itself.¹²⁷

This is almost exactly how emotion is pictured in Bowen’s 1927 novel *The Hotel*, and this is noted by Bennett and Royle:

¹²⁵ Parkinson, p. 171.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

¹²⁷ In the case of ‘private’ emotion (what Parkinson calls emotion when no one else is present) this is ‘a derivative phenomenon which depends on prior experience of interpersonal emotion’ (192). While debates about emotion often fracture along the difference between ‘real’ bodily sensation and mere ‘representational thinking’, that emotion works through representation without an origin, rather than indication, finds an ally in Antonio Damasio’s ‘background feeling’. Generating a continuous representation of the body ‘as if’ that provides a kind of reference for when sensory input deviates from the ‘normal’ representation, background feeling suggests that ‘our individual identity is anchored on this island of illusory living sameness against which we can be aware of myriad other things that manifestly change’ (Damasio, p. 155). For Damasio, the distinction that genuine emotions (as opposed, for example, to ‘aesthetic emotions’) require bodily change makes the mistake of assuming that the theatricality of the body means the body needs to enact the *feeling* of emotion in order to really feel that emotion. Instead, Damasio argues that the body ‘as if’ generated by background feeling means that ‘the brain learns to concoct the fainter image of an “emotional” body state, without having to re-enact it in the body proper’ (155).

As Sydney looks down from a hill above the hotel, she sees Veronica and Victor, two hotel guests, in the embrace of their first kiss: 'To her, looking down unawares, the couple gesticulating soundlessly below her in the sunshine appeared as in some perfect piece of cinema-acting, emotion represented without emotion' (42). Emotion represented without emotion is both an emotionless representation, and, more curiously, a representation of emotion in the absence of itself. The latter formulation would suggest a radical fictionalization of emotion as such: that emotion can be represented as without emotion figures the possibility of emotion only ever being an empty representation, a simulacrum with no referent.¹²⁸

The difference here would seem to be a matter of intensity; a difference between lack of emotion and its presence: a distinction, perhaps, between real and fictional emotion, aesthetic or live, mimetic or genuine. Parkinson's theory attributes the 'reality' of emotion to its unreality; its live intensity is the effect of emotion in place of emotion. Bowen's representation, however, blurs Sydney's 'emotionless representation' with emotion in the absence of itself. While this might appear to imply that that what leads to a 'radical fictionalization' is a lack of emotion, a 'waning of affect', instead it suggests that any representation of emotion *is* emotionless because that is how emotion works: emotion requires non-coincidence to be felt. Rei Terada makes this argument when she argues that the 'experience of being impassioned is itself an outcome of feeling compelled to look for passion although we cannot finally identify it. Because one does not find the source of it, one also does not run out of it'.¹²⁹

In Bowen's 1938 novel *The Death of The Heart*, sixteen year old Portia wonders 'whether a feeling could spring straight from the heart, be imperative, without being original'.¹³⁰ In a parenthetical address that inflects the absolute interiority of

¹²⁸ Bennett and Royle, p. 7. Bennett and Royle quote from Bowen's *The Hotel* (Penguin: London, 1927), p. 42.

¹²⁹ Terada, p. 47.

¹³⁰ Elizabeth Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* (Vintage: London, 1998), p. 169. *The Death of the Heart* was first published in England by Jonathan Cape in 1938. In their discussion, Bennett and Royle remark

Portia's thoughts with the absolute exteriority of the narrator's observations, Portia's question is qualified: '(But if love were original, if it were the unique device of two unique spirits, its importance would not be granted; it could not make a great common law felt. The strongest compulsions we feel throughout life are no more than compulsions to repeat a pattern: the pattern is not of our own device)' (72). Here *The Death of the Heart* initiates the kinds of dimensionality I suggested earlier is mobilised by emotion. Not only does an absolute interiority and absolute exteriority of emotion involve a circularity or citationality that precludes the most private of emotions and the most public from ever being 'real', but it also inflects these with each other. Thus the deepest feeling, that which is most private and substantive of the 'self', gains its sense of depth and subjective authenticity not from the degree of failure to express it, but from the degree to which the impossibility of saying what it is coincides with the idea of what it is.¹³¹ The absolute reality of Portia's love is 'measured' by its absolute unoriginality. Her depth of feeling does not emerge from a depth of subjectivity, but from the intensity of the difference between originality and unoriginality that implies them.

Emotion exceeds sequential or linear schematizations as well as distinctions between the real and fictional: in *The Death of the Heart*, the severity of Portia's suffering is not that she discovers passion can never be original, or pathos is not unoriginal, but that pathos and passion are implied.¹³² Pathos and passion move each other – this is what Rei Terada describes as the economy of emotion, the 'recirculating

that the novel 'obliges us to associate 'whatever feeling is in the heart' with...the uncanniness of sensing the heart as other' (72). Subsequent references provided in text.

¹³¹ In her discussion of the textuality of emotion Rei Terada draws on Derrida's discussion of Rousseau's 'giant' in *Of Grammatology*. Terada observes that for Derrida, it is 'the *inadequation of the designation which properly expresses the passion*' (42). Terada argues that it is 'not the sign's literalness with respect to the idea, then, that represents my fear itself...Nor is it the sign's imprecision regarding the man (its being able to say at most what he is like, not what he is). It is the *difference between* the sign's falseness with respect to its object and its accuracy with respect to its idea that represents the passion' (42-43).

¹³² As the OED Online observes, 'pathos' and 'passion' share the root 'pati-', to 'suffer'.

infinity of feeling living on'.¹³³ To explain this, Terada recalls the concept of Planck length. Max Planck proposed that, at a certain point, the 'classical description of gravity ceases to be valid, and quantum mechanics must be taken into account'.¹³⁴ This point, though theoretically uncertain and unprovable, is both the smallest unit of measurement possible *and* the moment when quantum physics takes hold: it implies mass, space, and time. For Terada, Planck length articulates how '...feeling never quite disappears...shrinking circles that approach the Planck scale start to appear as though they are getting larger. Pathos is the Planck length of emotion bounding the theory of emotion as the least that can be said'.¹³⁵ The diminishment of emotion then is also its acceleration: the 'ebbing of pathos makes more as well as less pathos: the less pathetic the end of pathos is, the more pathetic it is that it isn't pathetic any more. This regress typifies the structure of emotion'.¹³⁶ Emotion, stilled, is not only moving, but exceeds the frame that stills it. Stilled emotion is still in motion: diminishment and acceleration contract.

Portia's question and Sydney's emotion without emotion echo the virtuality of the person that circulates in criticism of *Eva Trout*. In her discussion of the novel, Maud Ellmann remarks:

...Eva leaps to the postmodernist conclusion that the depths do not exist: there is nothing hidden underneath the surface, no inner life behind the mask. Pictures are at least as real as people. Does the novelist endorse this vision? It is difficult to tell, particularly because

¹³³ Terada, p. 13. It is important to remember that these 'quantum physics' do not describe the circuitous effects of *circularity*, but the dynamics of echo, where intervention creates new effects. See Terada's discussion of the 'echo' and the circularities of thought in her chapter 'Cogito and the History of the Passions' in *Feeling in Theory*.

¹³⁴ From John Daintith (Ed.), *A Dictionary of Physics* (Oxford University Press: 2009), Oxford Reference Online. URL: <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t83.e2344>. Last accessed August 24, 2010.

¹³⁵ Terada, p. 14.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Bowen turns off the voice-over depriving the reader of the guidance of the narrator.¹³⁷

Eva's tears are undecidable in their working over of our ideas about what it means to have an interior, to be someone who loves. They overwhelm her 'two-dimensional conception of the world'¹³⁸ by producing the sign of an inside that confirms, through theatricality, the reality of what they express: 'As soon as they appear, these tears become the crowning Kodak moment, splashing on Eva's brooch like diamonds upon diamonds... But as Henry observes, 'an unreal act collects round it real-er emotion than a real act, sometimes'[sic].¹³⁹ Shooting Eva, Ellmann remarks, 'also shatters the delusion that a person is nothing but a picture. Eva has – or had – an inside after all'.¹⁴⁰ While Ellmann's discussion contrasts Eva's postmodern two-dimensionality with the three dimensioned 'inside' revealed by her death, it also observes that this distinction is made possible only by 'words of love': '...it is crucial that Eva's tears are summoned from the depths by words of love. Blurring her vision these tears mark the limits of Eva's "visual universe," and open up a world of love beyond the world of spectacle'.¹⁴¹ Yet if Henry's words of love insist Eva is really loved, they also offer Eva reality precisely in the form of virtuality. Just before Eva's 'brimming', Henry says: 'That could have been a fake, full of bricks and things. – But it isn't, Eva; it isn't. Do you mind?' (266). Rather than indicate his love, these words can only be *of* love: they can

¹³⁷ Ellmann, p. 221. Ellmann remarks that in *Eva Trout*, Bowen was trying to imagine 'a cinematographic existence, with no soundtrack' (221). Please see Chapter Four of this thesis for a discussion of how Bowen's short stories intervene, by theorising such an existence, in modernist debates about emotion and subjectivity. Ellmann's observation here points to potential work on the ways Bowen's work distinguishes between the silent and talking cinema, and how these cinematics might distinguish virtual ontologies.

¹³⁸ Ellmann, p. 222.

¹³⁹ *Eva Trout* quoted in Ellmann, p. 222.

¹⁴⁰ Ellmann., p. 223.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

only measure it as the greatest distance between what could be fake and what isn't:

Eva's 'Kodak' tears reply – where pathos and passion meet.

That pathos and passion seem to end with Eva's death, I want to suggest, does not dissolve the virtuality with which the novel presents us. Ellmann observes that, '[c]orny though they are, Eva's tears elicit real emotion in the reader... This is a lesson Bowen learned from Dickens the master of melodrama'.¹⁴² More melodramatic than even Eva's 'Kodak moment', perhaps, Eva's death pushes the limits of an unrealistic ending that comes at the absolute limit of a fictional world that has taken fictionality to its limit. If Eva's tear is the sign of her becoming, however, then stilling her, stopping her in motion, when she has perhaps begun to learn how to create the fiction of emotion, does not cancel out the instabilities of her virtual world but, under the physics of emotion, increases it – because it is no longer Eva's world in question, but the 'reality' of the world of love beyond *Eva Trout*. Eva's final 'still', her abeyance, leaves the novel in dissolution. Eva, Bennett and Royle write, like a 'novelist or like a reader unable to make sense of events because unable to concatenate' utters the last words 'what is "concatenation"?'.¹⁴³ Answered only by her final 'dissolution: still life', *Eva Trout*, they argue, leaves us with the dissolutions of our own lives: 'Still lives are movie-lives, going, in the instantaneous mobility of the convulsive event, of reading. A dissolution: mobile, fluid and uncontainably still, uncontainable still'.¹⁴⁴

Bowen's novels interest Bennett and Royle precisely because of the novels' conventionality – they appear to accommodate 'highly traditional notions of literary criticism (a focus on 'life', close reading, the affective power of literary texts, etc.)' while also representing 'powerful, theoretically-informed sites of cultural and

¹⁴² Ellmann., p. 222.

¹⁴³ Bennett and Royle, p. 156. To 'concatenate' is to 'chain together, to connect like the links of a chain, to link together' (OED Online).

¹⁴⁴ Bennett and Royle, p. 157.

ideological disruption'.¹⁴⁵ Their remark has its echo in Terada's interest in emotion: 'there does not seem to be anything unconventional, anything potentially radical in emotion'.¹⁴⁶ Yet reading emotion, it turns out, turns up its movements; this is not immobilizing, but moving. As Roland Barthes remarks, emotion is 'a disturbance, a bordering on collapse: something perverse, under respectable appearances; emotion is even, perhaps, the slyest of losses'.¹⁴⁷ Eva's tears do not redeem the 'deconstruction of everything that is seemingly most conventional and reassuring',¹⁴⁸ nor do they locate the blind-spot of these deconstructions, because, although Bennett and Royle don't discuss Eva's tears, these have been at work all along, implied with the fluid dynamics of dissolution.

By observing the difficulty of knowing whether Bowen 'endorses' this vision, Maud Ellmann's question summons the otherness of Bowen's reading effects: to endorse is not to merely 'approve', but to do so by 'writing on the back'.¹⁴⁹ I want to propose, then, that this is *Eva Trout*'s final dissolution: the novel needn't endorse its textual affects, because we do – reading the novel, we write Eva's person on the back of our own feeling for reality. This reality, we have, already, endorsed with the fiction of our feelings. Whether we read in Eva's 'brimming' a subject to be expressed, discovered beneath or behind her imperson, or don't – and whether Eva's person is punctured by or punctuates the novel's end – reading *Eva Trout* can neither confirm nor deny Eva's interiority. But it does dissolve our own. The only way we might decide the

¹⁴⁵ Bennett and Royle., p. xiv.

¹⁴⁶ Terada, p. 6.

¹⁴⁷ Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (Jonathan Cape: London, 1976), p. 25.

¹⁴⁸ Bennett and Royle, p. xvi.

¹⁴⁹ OED Online. The undecidability of the novel's 'endorsement' for this vision might be thought of in terms of the 'dorsality' or 'poetics of the back' that Peter Boxall observes at work in Bowen's writing. Remarking that the spectral and real haunt each other beyond distinction in Bowen's short story 'The Back Drawing Room', Boxall remarks: '...the boundary between front and back has been disturbed, disabling any interpretive attempt to distinguish the one from the other' (Peter Boxall, 'Edgeworth, Bowen, Beckett, Banville: A Minor Tradition' in *Since Beckett: Contemporary Writing in the Wake of Modernism* (Continuum: London, 2009), pp.21-37, p.27).

depth of her representation is to measure our distinction between ‘reality’ and ‘fiction’ – discerning this, we find it virtually no bigger than a tear. Awed by Eva’s ‘bewildering, brilliant blurring filling up, swimming and brimming over’, Henry Dancey exclaims that he ‘can’t get over those tears, those extraordinary tears!’ Perhaps, as Eva replies to Dancey, ‘We must go back, now’ (267).

Chapter Two

Frederick's Tears and the Literariness of Emotion

According to Elizabeth Bowen, the short story 'revolves round one crisis only – one might call it, almost, a crisis in itself'.¹ For Phyllis Lassner, this crisis is exemplified in Bowen's 1936 short story 'Tears, Idle Tears', about seven-year-old Frederick Dickinson, who suffers from 'incontinence in the matter of tears'.² The crisis of Bowen's story, Lassner argues, lies in the emotional history behind Frederick's tears; it makes known the grief the story confronts, playing this out along with the unfolding of its history. In doing so, Lassner argues, the story performs 'an act of reparation'.³ While for Lassner uncovering the emotion behind Frederick's tears resolves the crisis, I propose that this is its beginning. Rather than offer us a reading of Frederick's tears that discovers their emotional origin, the story's crisis *is* the readability of Frederick's 'catastrophe of tears' (482), the meaning of 'Tears, Idle Tears'.

'Tears, Idle Tears', is torn open, opens at a tear, by tears, Frederick 'burst into tears in the middle of Regent's Park' (481). The story takes place one May in London: Mrs Dickinson, sensing Frederick's imminent tears, cries out 'Frederick, you *can't* – in the middle of Regent's Park!' (481). But Frederick does cry, horrifying, once again, his mother and himself. For Mrs Dickinson, Frederick's tears are 'a shame of which she could speak to no one; no offensive weakness of body could have upset her more'

¹ Preface to 'Stories by Elizabeth Bowen' in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. Hermione Lee (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1986), pp.127-130, p. 128.

² Elizabeth Bowen, 'Tears, Idle Tears' in *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* (Vintage: London, 1999), pp. 481-487. Although *The Collected Stories* dates 'Tears, Idle Tears' using its 1941 publication in *Look at all those Roses* (published by Gollancz), Dr Marcia Farrell's invaluable online bibliography of work by and about Elizabeth Bowen notes that the story first appeared in *Listener* 16 (2 Sept. 1936), pp. 447-449. See *Elizabeth Bowen: A Comprehensive Bibliography* URL: <http://wilkes.edu/pages/2694.asp>. Subsequent citations for 'Tears, Idle Tears' are provided using in-text references to the *Collected Stories*.

³ Lassner, p. 46.

(481). Mrs. Dickinson directs Frederick to look at a duck until he stops crying:

Frederick, standing still, looks at ‘the duck that sat folded into a sleek white cypher on the green, grassy margin of the lake’ (483) until ‘something unseeing in its expression calmed him’ (483). While he gazes at the duck, Mrs Dickinson walks on and the story unfolds the origins of her disappointment with Frederick, and her own stoicism, leading back to her husband’s death, five years earlier. After this loss, Mrs Dickinson ‘became the perfect friend for men who wished to wish to marry but were just as glad not to, and for married men who liked just a little pathos without being upset’ (484).

From this history, the story returns to Frederick who, no longer crying, is left ‘perfectly blank, so that he stared at the duck with abstract intensity, perceiving its moulded feathers and porcelain-smooth neck’ (484). Reaching out to touch it, the duck slides away from him; staring after it, Frederick’s ‘passion of observation’ (485) is interrupted by a bespectacled girl wearing ‘four celluloid bangles, each of a different colour’ (486), who has witnessed the scene. The girl asks Frederick about his tears and proceeds to tell him about a young man named George, who also cries: he ‘knots himself up and bellows’ (486). They discuss George’s tears whilst eating an apple, until, seeing Mrs. Dickinson’s approach, they shake hands and Frederick returns to his mother. Frederick seems at the end of the story to be a different boy; he skips and shouts, and tells his mother about nearly catching the duck. When she tells him he is silly, that he couldn’t catch a duck, he doesn’t cry but instead counters: ‘Oo, yes, I could, I could. If I’d had salt for its tail!’ (487). ‘Tears, Idle Tears’ ends with a Bowenesque turn: ‘...years later’, the story closes, ‘Frederick could still remember with ease, pleasure, and with a sense of lonely shame being gone, that calm, white duck swimming off round the bank. But George’s friend with the bangles, and George’s trouble, fell through a cleft in his memory and were forgotten soon’ (487). At the end of

the story, Frederick's tears are resolved into this cleft, this cleaving of 'Tears, Idle Tears'.

How do we read Frederick's tears? What can they tell us about emotion? Do these tears, in fact, mean anything? While these questions might seem to deliberately miss the point of Frederick's tears (a point the story appears to make very clear), they are echoed in the questions that impelled Tom Lutz's 1999 study *Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears*.⁴ Curious about the lack of scholarship on a phenomena so ubiquitous to everyday life, Lutz's study tracks tears across historical periods, cultures, scholarly disciplines, and aesthetic forms, to ask: 'Why do we cry?...Why do certain ways of feeling make us cry and why does crying feel the way it does? How do we understand other people's weeping?...Why and how do we stop crying?...What, exactly, do tears express?'⁵ Moving from the earliest written record of tears in the fourteenth century tablets that record the grieving goddess Anat 'sating herself with weeping, to drink tears like wine',⁶ to Man Ray's stylized 'prototypical modernist representation of tears'⁷ in the 1932/33 photograph 'Larmes (Tears)', Lutz's study works up to Jerome Neu's proposition that emotions are a 'kind of thinking', a cognition Neu suggests is best expressed by William Blake's injunction that 'a tear is an intellectual thing'.⁸

⁴ Tom Lutz, *Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999).

⁵ T. Lutz, p. 19.

⁶ Ibid., p. 33.

⁷ Ibid., p. 37.

⁸ For Lutz's citation of Neu, see Lutz (300). Lutz does not provide a source for his reference to Neu's work, only that it is a position developed 'in the 1980s'. The most likely source for Lutz's note is Neu's article 'A Tear is an Intellectual Thing' in *Representations*, No. 19 (Summer, 1987), pp. 35-61. Neu's arguments about the relationship between thought and emotion were first developed in *Emotion, Thoughts and Therapy: a Study of Hume, Spinoza and the Relationship of Philosophical Theories of the Emotions to Psychological Theories of Therapy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). Neu's *A Tear is an Intellectual Thing: The Meanings of Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) consolidates arguments developed across 25 years of work into a study that aims to extend thinking about emotion from psychoanalysis and philosophy of mind into an account that can be roughly described as cognitive. The quotation that titles his study, and from which he suggests his arguments proceed, is from William

While Lutz's study is hopeful about the work that was, in 1999, beginning to emerge about emotion, he found that the capacity to organize the constellation of accounts, anecdotes, speculations and theories of emotion that his study brought to bear on understanding the representation, meaning, function and origin of tears, was complicated by their tendency towards occlusion:

in any time and any place, the meaning of tears is rarely pure and never simple... The best we can do is to translate tears into a variety of languages – historical, physiological, psychological, sociological, anthropological, literary, and philosophical, for instance... None of these disciplinary lenses puts the full depth of crying in focus, but each achieves its own kind of clarity.⁹

Tears, Lutz suggests, are an enigma. Despite their 'conspicuous physicality' they 'resist interpretation', remaining 'the most substantial and yet the most fleeting, the most obvious and yet the most enigmatic proof of our emotional lives'.¹⁰ Asking in 'The End of Tears', 'how or why we stop crying, or sometimes don't', Lutz concludes his study by gathering together some of the then emerging work on emotion from neuroscience, anthropology, literary theory, and psychology, to suggest that the turn towards emotion across disciplines would inaugurate an end to the questions tears pose. Quoting Roland Barthes, Lutz writes: '“Who will write the history of tears?” Roland Barthes asked. We all will.'¹¹ Just a few years later, Keith Opdahl declared that 'the twentieth century may someday be known for its quiet rediscovery of emotion'.¹²

Certainly Lutz's inconclusive emphasis on the mysteriousness of tears might now, only a decade later, seem outdated, given the critical preoccupation with emotion,

Blake's 'The Grey Monk', which appears in the Pickering Manuscript (1800-1804). See David Erdman (Ed.), *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, Newly revised ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 489-490. For Erdman's discussion of the dating of Blake's poem see p. 859.

⁹ T. Lutz, p. 25.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 29.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 304.

¹² Keith Opdahl, *Emotion as Meaning: The Literary Case for How We Imagine* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2002), 79.

feeling and affect across the disciplines. But as Rei Terada observes, the relationship between the ‘proof’ of emotion and emotion itself is far from certain. Instead, what is remarkable about the abundance of work on emotion is that not only has it not produced a coherent theory of what emotion is, but it operates, often by borrowing between disciplines, as if it has. As Jenefer Robinson, whose cognitive account of emotion seeks to elaborate the ‘special relationship between the arts and the emotions’¹³ wrote in 2005:

Until very recently...there was little consensus about what the emotions really are and how they actually operate, and so it has been hard to adjudicate exactly how they function in relation to the arts. This situation has now begun to change. Within the last thirty years or so there has been an upsurge of research into the emotions in disciplines as diverse as experimental and clinical psychology, neurobiology, anthropology, sociology, and philosophy. We now have a much better idea of what emotions are. Not that there is a complete consensus: far from it. Competing theories are rife. But none the less there is growing agreement about emotion and what its most important ingredients are.¹⁴

Disciplines other than literature are marshalled here as if to exert an epistemic pressure to staunch the uncertainty the softer ‘arts’ might bring to emotion. But while Robinson’s use of these theories, particularly cognitive and evolutionary psychology, compellingly argues that fiction affects us materially by provoking emotional reactions that ‘may become encoded in emotional memory, making new connections between affective appraisals and bodily responses (somatic markers)’¹⁵, her account is restricted to the ‘encoding’ activity that can be read in canonical literatures. When it comes to the ‘post-modern’ story, she writes, ‘the emotions evoked are managed to such a high degree that we are mainly aware as we read of the cognitive pleasures of intellectualizing and

¹³ Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper than Reason: Emotion and its Role in Literature, Music and Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

distancing than of the rewards of deep emotional engagement'.¹⁶ Robinson's account finds emotion 'at work' only in certain texts because these demonstrate the emotions that her rubric can recognize. Very few of the literary, visual, or musical case studies Robinson finds fruitful for her theory of emotion occur during or after modernism, and none are amongst those she categorises as the 'postmodern'. Instead these are precisely the kinds of case studies that she suggests resist her theorizations because they are not emotional or, rather, do not express the specific emotions her theory discerns as evidence of deep emotional engagement. Rather than identify a theory of emotion, then, Robinson's work mobilizes emotion theory to recycle not only the kind of aesthetic periodisation Rei Terada observes is attributed to Fredric Jameson's inauguration of the 'waning of affect', but also the diagramming of a subject by emotion, and the assumption that the postmodern text is unemotional.¹⁷

What Robinson's theorization of emotion exemplifies, then, is that the study of emotion is complicated by the problem of 'the case-study' – that, as Jacques Derrida reminds us, the 'object' of study is produced *in* analysis, not only described by it: the analyst's 'offering' is 'already a discourse, at least the possibility of a discourse, putting a symbolicity to work'.¹⁸ But it also registers the urgency of Rei Terada's recognition that this problem is particularly acute for emotion research. There is, at heart, a certain uncertainty about what emotion is, and emotion continues to exceed the frameworks and taxonomies we employ to describe it. Rei Terada, observing emotion's uncertain status, suggests that this forms a 'proverbial loci of anxiety' for its thinkers: '[t]he impossibility of identifying particular emotions by signs leads to the deeper worry that it

¹⁶ Robinson, p. 228.

¹⁷ See Terada's introduction 'Emotion after the "Death of the Subject"' in *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the "Death of the Subject"* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001).

¹⁸ Jacques Derrida, 'Passions: An Oblique Offering' in David Wood, ed., *Derrida: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 5 – 35, p. 6.

is not possible to know what emotion is'.¹⁹ Rather than pose this problem as something to be overcome, however, she urges us to consider it as vital to thinking about what emotion might be: 'It is not possible to talk about what emotion is,' she notes 'apart from arguments about how it can be conceived [because] [t]he difficulty of representing emotion...is the difficulty of knowing what it is'.²⁰ In this way, she suggests, 'emotion' may be thought of in relation to 'the secret', noting that, for Derrida, 'passion', is 'tucked into' secrecy: 'Passion, open but illegible, fits the definition of a secret'.²¹ For Derrida, there 'is no passion without secret, this very secret, indeed no secret without this passion'.²² Passion is 'in place' of the secret which, 'without content' neither conceals, nor reveals itself: it 'simply exceeds the play of veiling/unveiling'.²³ I begin with Bowen's story to suggest it stages and interrupts the emergent literature of emotion by re-reading the apparent readability of idle tears. The crisis of Elizabeth Bowen's 'Tears, Idle Tears', I suggest, is the problem of reading emotion according to signs, reading emotion *in* and *beneath* signs. Exemplifying passion's secret, emotion too 'remains inviolable even when one thinks one has revealed it'.²⁴

Bowen's story re-reads tears from the outset, taking its title and subject – 'idle tears' – from one of the 'idylls' in Tennyson's 1847 poem 'The Princess':

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.²⁵

¹⁹ Terada, p. 45. Terada draws on Derrida's thinking of the secret in 'Passions: An Oblique Offering'.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Derrida, 'Passions', p. 22.

²³ Ibid., pp. 20, 21.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

²⁵ Alfred Lord Tennyson, 'Tears, Idle Tears' in *Alfred Lord Tennyson: Selected Poems*, ed. Aidan Day (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 125. For a seminal discussion of Tennyson's idle tears see Cleanth Brooks' 'The Motivation of Tennyson's Weeper' in *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (London: Harcourt Brace, 1947).

Here the speaker dwells upon idle tears, contemplating the meaning – or not knowing the meaning – of tears that ‘from the depth of some divine despair / rise in the heart and gather to the eyes.’ ‘Idle’, the Oxford English Dictionary tells us, means empty, worthless: ‘void of any real usefulness or significance, void of meaning or sense, without result, without cause’.²⁶ Tennyson’s poem responds to the apparent idleness of these tears by hooking them onto nostalgia, melancholy and remembrance. These ‘idle tears’, the poem suggests, are not empty or idle at all, but instead full of signification and meaning. Rising as if pushed out to the surface of the body by a swell or brimming of inner emotion, their movement is a response to ‘looking on the happy autumn-fields, and *thinking* of the days that are no more’[*italics mine*]; the tears ‘gather to the eye’ where, there expressed, they become ‘readable’ or analysable. The purpose of these ‘idle’ tears, then, may be recuperated by catching them into a causal relation with cognition and perception; not ‘idle’ at all, these tears function as a somatic signifier of the emotional depth behind the eye, within the subject ‘I’. Once secret and mysterious, Tennyson’s ‘idle tears’, through reading and analysis, become solvable, and can be slipped from idleness into an economy of function and purpose. As the OED notes, the ‘idle’ machine is a broken one; repairing the disconnection its repetitions signal restores it to its proper function. I am not suggesting an uncomplicated reading of tears on Tennyson’s part nor do I want to suggest the poem’s status is stable or decided in Tennyson criticism. Instead I want to consider how his poem initiates through an appeal to recuperation, a ‘de-idle-ing’ of ‘idleness’, the problem of reading tears. If the poem is about ‘idle’ tears, and these tears become ‘de-idled’ through the very act of reading, then what remains? How do we read these ‘idle’ tears? Bowen’s text in turn picks up on this problem of reading tears, tripping, or idling, over Tennyson’s.

²⁶ OED Online entry for ‘idle’.

Bowen's 'idle tears' are caught up in Frederick, whose 'burst' carries the title's anaphora to his tears themselves, as if he too suffers the repetitions of a faulty connection. Unlike Tennyson's 'I', Frederick cannot solve his tears; contemplation does not lead him to a meaning or cause. Instead, they are 'shocking' to him, 'bowing down' and 'annulling' – 'he never knew what happened' (28). They do not rise, nor do they seem divine. Their violent involuntariness makes Frederick 'his own shameful and squalid enemy' (28) and his mother's as well: 'His tears were a shame of which she could speak to no one; no offensive weakness of body could have upset her more' (27). For both Frederick and his mother, his tears are inexplicable and disturbing. By speaking the unsolvability of his tears, the text makes them 'secret', invoking the desire for detection, for meaning and explanation, for a 'key' to Frederick's tears. With Frederick unable to offer a key, the text looks to itself to furnish one.

At the centre of the story, when Frederick is gazing at the duck and trying to stop crying, we have a scene that looks back into his infancy and seems to describe the origin of his tears. Structurally, this takes place at the mid-point of the narrative, suggesting itself as a fulcrum, a textual pivot on which the narrative turns. Up to this point we are confronted with confusion, speculation, mystery – after this scene, it appears, everything in the story falls into place. The scene suggests what psychoanalysis describes as a 'primal scene', a moment in the depths of Frederick's past, as well as the narrative's, that provides what LaPlanche and Pontalis in 'Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality' call 'a representation of, and a solution to, the major enigmas which confront the child...a moment of emergence, the beginning of a history...the origin of the subject himself'.²⁷

²⁷ Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, 'Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality' in Victor Burgin, James Donald and Cora Kaplan (Eds.), *Formations of Fantasy* (London: Methuen & Co., 1986), pp. 7 – 34, p. 19.

In this 'primal scene', we learn that Frederick's father died unexpectedly when Frederick was only two. Throughout her husband's hospitalisation, Mrs. Dickinson 'had hardly turned a hair' (30). Her stoicism, however, is soon perceived by those around her as an unhealthy failure to express her feelings, to the point of their own discomfort. A friend, who finds Mrs. Dickinson's failure to cry too much of a strain suggests they look in on Frederick. When his mother sees Frederick 'flushed, and drawing up his upper lip in his sleep as his father used to do' she gives way:

Something suddenly seemed to strike his mother, who, slumping down by the cot, ground her face and forehead into the fluffy blanket, then began winding the blanket round her two fists. Her convulsions, though proper, were fearful: the cot shook. The friend crept away into the kitchen, where she stayed a half-hour, muttering to the maid. They made more tea and waited for Mrs. Dickinson to give full birth to her grief. (30)

Here then, the text suggests, is the secret origin of Frederick's tears: Mrs. Dickinson's giving birth to her grief, through a gesture of violent overlay. Usually composed and distant, here she becomes a smothering form, sensual and intimate, gyrational bodily gestures covering Frederick with an intensity of contact. The 'properness' of her grief is undermined both by her friend's inability to stand it and the peculiar absence of tears – Mrs. Dickinson convulses, and grinds her face into the blanket, but does not cry. This is her only moment of grief, and it is marked by the absence of tears, the very excess from which Frederick suffers. It is as if she has transferred her absent tears to him. Afterwards Frederick lies awake, as if 'he knew' (484) – in giving birth to grief, Mrs. Dickinson has given birth to 'Frederick'. Frederick's primal scene suggests that the 'solution to his enigma' is this moment of contact between himself and his mother, the transmission of her grief. He cries because of his mother's failure to mourn; this refusal, at a crucial moment, has resulted instead in incorporation.

In *The Shell and the Kernel*, Abraham and Torok note that Freud's formulation of healthy and unhealthy mourning, or mourning versus melancholia, pivots on 'identification': in mourning, 'the bereaved become the dead for themselves and take their time to work through, gradually and step by step, the effects of the separation'.²⁸ This takes place through introjection, the gradual 'recovery of investments' (i.e. the object-relations) placed in the lost object.²⁹ Introjection is vital to healthy mourning – it is through introjection that the self is 'reconfigured' after loss. In this model of mourning, however, introjection can be painful; for some, this pain is avoided, and the 'object' is instead 'swallowed' and kept whole within the subject.³⁰ This is 'incorporation': by 'swallowing' the loss instead of expressing it, the subject is exempt from the painful reconfiguration of the self that mourning would require. Incorporation, then, is a kind of 'magical cure' for mourning, it is the 'refusal to introject loss'.³¹ Incorporation 'reveals a gap within the psyche; it points to something that is missing just where introjection should have occurred'.³² The incorporated objects, the loss that has not been introjected, 'stand like tombs in the life of the ego' and, 'thirsting for introjection ... [the ego] tricks itself with a magical procedure in which "eating" is paraded as the equivalent of an immediate but purely hallucinatory and illusory "introjection"'.³³ Incorporation is marked by an external 'display' that is a false

²⁸ Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel, Volume 1*. Trans. Nicholas Rand (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p.111. Identification is the process by which the 'subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially after the model the other provides. It is by a series of identifications that the personality is constituted and specified' (Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac Books, 1973)), p. 205.

²⁹ Abraham and Torok, p. 111.

³⁰ In 'Cryptaesthesia: The Case of *Wuthering Heights*', Nicholas Royle observes Abraham & Torok's remarks in *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) that incorporation's 'swallowing' is 'highly paradoxical': 'It is to avoid "swallowing" the loss that one imagines swallowing, or having swallowed, what is lost, in the form of an object' (Nicholas Royle, *Telepathy and Literature: Essays on the Reading Mind* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 28-62, p.29).

³¹ Abraham and Torok, p. 126.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., pp. 114-115.

introjection, allowing the ‘swallowing’ of loss to persist: such external signifiers of incorporation include hiccupping, salivating, vomiting, or, in Frederick’s case, crying.

Frederick’s tears begin when a ‘cold, black pit with no bottom opened inside himself’, and ‘a red-hot bellwire jagged up through him from the pit of his frozen belly to the caves of his eyes. Then the hot, gummy rush of tears...’ (482). As if his mother’s ‘convulsions’ have crossed his wires, this ‘jagged bellwire’ transmits to Frederick’s eyes, that, figured as ‘caves’, mouth their orality in the form of their openness, their cleaving and cleft lids or lips suggesting what Derrida calls ‘eyelid-lips’.³⁴ Overspilled by Frederick’s ‘gummy rush’, this strange confusion between the ‘wounds of his eyes’ (486) and the ‘terrible square grin he felt his mouth take’ (482) initiates a kind of lachrymal vomit congested with suggestions of all the other secrets, or private secretions, these tears might expose: ‘crying made him so abject...it dragged up all unseemliness into view. No wonder everyone was repelled’ (482). Unable to utter more than a sob, Frederick’s tears register Tom Lutz’s observation of the perception that tears ‘supplant articulation’.³⁵ It is Frederick’s eyes that are opened and full, seeming to speak – not his mouth.

For Abraham and Torok, the surface affects that mark incorporation are a ‘disguised language’ ‘signalling introjection, without actually accomplishing it...’.³⁶ As such they point to the place where the analyst needs to ‘operate’.³⁷ The illusory

³⁴ Derrida links the eye-lids with lips in *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), where he describes ‘the eye that must not be seen, or the eye open like a wound, indeed gaping like an open mouth whose eyelid-lips might also open up, in order to expose it, onto a woman’s sex’ (87).

³⁵ T. Lutz, p. 21.

³⁶ Abraham and Torok, p. 115.

³⁷ As discussed in the introduction, it is problematic to offer clear distinctions between ‘affect’, ‘emotion’, and ‘feeling’. While many emotion scholars generalise ‘affect’ as the physiological experience that may give rise to emotion, in *Ugly Feelings* Sianne Ngai observes that in psychoanalysis, ‘affect’ designates ‘feeling described from an observer’s (analyst’s) perspective’ so as to distinguish between the emotional experience represented by the person experiencing it and the person analysing it (25). Ngai’s remark

introjection, although appearing *on the surface* to have no meaning, does then have purpose as an ‘invitation extended to the analyst to proceed with the exhumation [and] an appropriate directive for this stage of the analysis’ – the false introjection says “‘Accuse me’”.³⁸ Frederick’s tears, through the intervention of analysis, then, become a readable somatic signifier, visible to others, that there is a secret within the subject to be ‘exhumed’, an origin to be discovered, and a meaning behind the signifier to be recovered. Frederick’s ‘idle’ tears signify not just a desire to be read but suggest how to read them – they signify incorporation and the illusory introjection. His ‘idle tears’ are a somatic language that asks for accusation; beneath them is his mother’s grief, whole and unassimilated, destined to be repeated, to idle, in Frederick, rearing its ugly head until it is read. Through *reading* ‘idle’ tears their secret meaning may be discovered, analysed, and, finally, exhumed. Analysis, critical intervention, offers a ‘solution’ by articulating the emotion these idle tears mark.

Certainly, following the ‘primal scene’, the extraction of the secret, the text seems to fall into place. The ‘bespectacled girl’ (485) who witnessed Frederick’s tears is able, with her doubled vision, to stand in as analyst. Where incorporation has occurred, the analyst’s task is to provide a means for reflection without also re-enacting the false introjection. The girl asks Frederick ‘what’s been biting you?’ and, while he contemplates this question, offers him an apple ‘with a waxy, bright skin’ (485). This provides a means for him to replace the hallucinatory introjection his tears signify; while crying only makes him more ‘abject’, the girl reassures Frederick that eating the apple, a real rather than figurative swallowing, will make him feel better: ‘Go on,’ she said ‘swallow: it’ll settle your chest’ (485). Frederick ‘bites the apple’ much as his

corresponds with Abraham and Torok’s inclusion of ‘affect’ under the operations of incorporation (Abraham and Torok, p. 113).

³⁸Abraham and Torok, p. 121.

grief has bitten him – he ‘opened his jaws as wide as they would go, then bit slowly, deeply into the apple’ (485). They discuss the strange story of George, a boy in the girl’s office, who, like Frederick, doesn’t know why he cries. The girl helps Frederick to see his tears as a kind of narrative; they are ‘all the way you see things’ (486). Through analysis, discovering the secret of what the tears ‘mean’, they can be solved. Not idle at all, Frederick and the text’s ‘tears’ signify the desire to be read; they say ‘accuse me’, ‘exhume my secret’.

Bowen’s ‘Tears, Idle Tears’, then, appears to offer the perfect case study to demonstrate the interpretive powers of analysis to not only ‘get at’ emotion, but also a text – it would posit the ‘tears’ of Frederick’s body as the ‘tears’ of the text’s title – both Frederick and the narrative are marked by tears from the very beginning; both are about tears. In this way the story writes a crucial correspondence between the subject’s body and the text’s. By finding a secret source behind Frederick’s tears, his body and the text become open and readable, their displays pointing to a certain cause beneath the surface, expressing a beneath to be brought to the surface.

And yet, here we trip, or idle.

The heart of the text, the ‘primal scene’, we remember, is fiction. The origin of Frederick’s tears is a fictional moment that Frederick himself does not remember nor recount; it is told to us as readers by Bowen’s strange omniscient narrator who threads together the apparent interior of each character to provide a sense of getting at or behind tears, solving them, and the text. Frederick does not remember his primal scene, nor does he discover it – we do. By reading the origin of Frederick’s tears we are able to read his incorporation and subsequent introjection – yet the primal scene is only ever

the *emergence* of an origin, a subject – it is a dramatization, itself a fiction, a moment of and in interpretation that simultaneously reads and writes the scene. In ‘Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality’, we are cautioned to remember that the primal scene is ‘not merely material to be analysed’; it is, like the case study or example, ‘*the result of analysis*’ [italics mine].³⁹ If we forget that Frederick’s idle tears emerge not from the scene offered, but from reading, the story reminds us by locating literature at the heart of Frederick’s origin, enfolded in the primal scene.

We recall that the friend *urges* Mrs Dickinson to ‘give birth to grief’ because the friend cannot bear the strain of Mrs. Dickinson’s inability to cry:

...another officer’s wife who had been her friend had said she was braver than could be good for anyone. When Toppy finally died the other woman had put the unflinching widow into a taxi and driven back with her to the Dickinson’s bungalow. She kept saying: ‘Cry, dear, cry you’d feel better.’ She made tea and clattered about, repeating: ‘Don’t mind me, darling: just have a big cry.’ The strain became so great that tears streamed down her own face. Mrs Dickinson looked past her palely, with a polite smile. (483)

Mrs. Dickinson’s absence of tears makes tears stream down the *other* woman’s face.

Unable to bear Mrs Dickinson’s failure to cry, the friend finally leads Mrs Dickinson ‘into the room where Frederick lay in his cot...[where] [s]omething suddenly seemed to strike his mother’ (484). The breaking point for Mrs Dickinson’s friend, the point that causes her to take Mrs. Dickinson to Frederick, is when she ‘almost tittering with despair thought of a poem of Tennyson’s she had learnt as a child’ (483).

This return, at the centre of not only the text but the heart of the fulcrum, to the poem over which the entire text idles, suggests that the friend’s need for Mrs Dickinson to cry comes from her own literary formations of mourning and its language. When Mrs Dickinson does not ‘write’ her grief in the way her friend can read – does not offer

³⁹ LaPlanche and Pontalis, ‘Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality’, p. 14.

tears as proof of her grief – the friend brings her to her son so that her grief might become ‘expressed’, visible, readable by signs. *If* Mrs Dickinson’s overlay is the origin of Frederick’s ‘idle tears’, then, the condition of this origin is literature: one might wonder whether, without Tennyson’s idle tears, Frederick would cry. The very foundation of analysis, the apparent ‘origin’ of Frederick’s tears becomes instead a ‘radical fictionalization’ of emotion, ‘the possibility of emotion only ever being an empty representation, a simulacrum with no referent’.⁴⁰ The meaning behind tears, uncovered by reading, returns us again to fiction; analysis turns up only reading, and tears would turn up only interpretation. Nothing would have been expressed or exhumed. What then of Frederick’s ‘idle tears’?

Here we might remark upon two peculiar features in the final lines of the story: the cleft on which it closes, and the white duck this cleaving secretes: ‘Years later, Frederick could still remember, with ease, pleasure and with a sense of lonely shame being gone, that calm, white duck swimming off round the bank. But George’s friend with the bangles, and George’s trouble, fell through a cleft in his memory and were forgotten soon’ (487). Here the entire event has ‘fallen through a cleft’ in Frederick’s memory; we are still reading the text, but instead find ourselves reading an odd layer in the narration, an interstitial space between the ‘end of the story’ and the end of our reading, where what we have read is enclosed. This closing of the text, of Frederick’s memory, counters the opening of the text, in which Frederick ‘burst’ into tears. Here at the end the text’s ‘lids’ cleave, enfolding the origin of Frederick’s tears and their dramatisation: discovered, his tears are recovered, secret-ed. Yet Frederick is still visible, calm and holding onto the white duck his mother had directed him to look at when he suffered from idle tears. In ‘secret-ing’ the idle tears, it is as if the text secretes

⁴⁰ Bennett and Royle, p. 7.

Frederick and the duck through the force, the pressure, of reading and of interpretation. But what has been secreted? The duck, if we recall, had sat ‘folded into a sleek white cypher’ (483).

‘Cypher’, from ‘cifr’, the Arabic numeration for ‘zero’ or ‘nought’, simultaneously invokes emptiness, absence and function.⁴¹ It is a character ‘of no value by itself’, but which increases or decreases the value of other figures according to its position. This originary ‘nothing’ provides an interpretive possibility to that with which it comes in contact: as such a ‘cypher’ also describes a ‘secret or disguised manner of writing’, ‘anything written in cipher’, and the ‘key to such a system’. The cypher, then, is what appears to be a code, the method for writing it, and the method for reading it – a cypher is an ‘intertexture of letters’ that figures the problem of interpretation and the impossibility of reading. To read a cypher is to already be determined by that cypher, to read according to the cypher. Remarkably, a cypher is also the ‘continuous sounding of any note upon an organ, owing to the imperfect closing of the pallet or valve without any pressure upon the key’. This sound of this ‘cypher’ has an apparent completeness or integrity that is conditioned by its own imperfection as an instrument. The failure of the cypher to ‘be closed’ is what brings it into being. Frederick’s duck, a sleek ‘cypher’, becomes then an idle cry that is both empty and figures its own emptiness, readable yet unresolvable – it is the directive to read, the anticipation, and determination, of that reading, as well as the reading event itself.

Earlier, I observed Rei Terada’s argument that, rather than overcome the problem of the relationship between the idea of emotion and its representation, we might use this problem as a locus for thinking about what emotion is. Terada suggests

⁴¹ OED Online entry for ‘cipher’. The OED does not provide a timeline for the spelling of ‘cipher’ rather than ‘cypher’, however the quotations provided for different usages suggest that since the 16th century ‘cipher’ has been the more normative spelling.

that we think of emotion as the phenomenology of the textual difference between ideality and substance. In Bowen's 'Tears, Idle Tears', this phenomenalisation, I suggest, is figured as the 'secreted' cypher, itself the reconfiguration, through reading, of Frederick's tears as neither meaningful nor empty, but rather a radical fictionalisation of textual affect as the space of interpretation itself. Through the cypher, Bowen helps us to think about emotion as neither readable nor recoverable; instead, the story registers Bennett and Royle's observation that, in reading Bowen, we are reminded that there 'fiction at the origin...there is no clinical or any other purportedly real context which is not worked over, cut up in advance by fiction, by literacy'.⁴² I want to suggest that emotion, as Derrida writes of the secret, 'gives rise to no *process*...It may appear to give rise to one (indeed it always does so), it may lend itself to it, but it never surrenders to it.'⁴³ Rather than invite a critical practice for 'reading' literary emotion, then, for discovering emotion *in* literature, 'Tears, Idle Tears', and the cypher it secretes requires us to think instead about a literariness *of* emotion, emotion *as* literary.

Critical readings of 'Tears, Idle Tears' are scarce, and the few readings critics have undertaken rarely exceed a few sentences. The story is briefly discussed in Lassner's 1991 study of Bowen's short fiction with which I began my discussion, and she reads it as the story of a 'child's painful entry into individuality' that offers a powerful feminist critique by eliciting an empathy that 'extends from the child's needs to a denial that women achieve fulfilment and identity only by wishing to satisfy those needs'.⁴⁴ For Heather Bryant Jordan, Frederick's tears point to his mother's failure: they 'make overt what she fears, namely, that all may not be right with the environment

⁴² Bennett and Royle, p. 45.

⁴³ Derrida, 'Passions', p. 22.

⁴⁴ Lassner, p. 45-46.

she has fostered for him'.⁴⁵ In William Heath's 1961 study he suggests the story, through its intertextuality with Tennyson's poem, is about the past's 'first idyllic, finally destructive' force.⁴⁶ For Hermione Lee, Frederick weeps 'terrible and involuntary tears inherited from the suppressed grief of his widowed mother' that demonstrate how, in Bowen's writing, '[c]hildhood despair is often witnessed, though it may not be understood'.⁴⁷ Finally, in an essay exploring the relationship between 'Tears, Idle Tears' and 'Happy Autumn Fields', which also takes its title from Tennyson's poem, Martin Bidney attends to the ways Bowen's story develops or, as I would suggest, 'idles over', the language of Tennyson's poem. For Bidney, however, these allusions expose the themes of Tennyson's lyric, so as to extrapolate, and express, the cure for the problems they pose: Bowen 'radically re-imagines...a Victorian lyric of nostalgic melancholia...in order to show how this condition fosters, and is fostered by, a regressive, narcissistic mindset'.⁴⁸ Bidney locates in Frederick's tears not only a case study in 'the psychological pattern'⁴⁹ of narcissistic melancholy that 'rewrites Tennyson's lyric in a modern psychological context [but] radically revises it to show how narcissistic melancholy may be cured'.⁵⁰ By learning to read Frederick's tears, Bidney argues, they are resolved: by understanding the hidden meaning behind his tears, Frederick, and his mother, are able to look beyond them – this new way of looking breaks their 'daily deadlock'.⁵¹ Bidney's cure is effected by correctly reading Frederick's tears; like the 'bespectacled girl' whose encounter with Frederick is

⁴⁵ Heather Jordan Bryant, *How Will the Heart Endure: Elizabeth Bowen and the Landscape of War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 28.

⁴⁶ William Heath, *Elizabeth Bowen: An Introduction to Her Novels* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), p. 128.

⁴⁷ Lee, p. 147.

⁴⁸ Martin Bidney, 'Nostalgic Narcissism in Comic and Tragic Perspectives: Elizabeth Bowen's Two-Fictional Reworkings of a Tennyson Lyric' in *Studies in Short Fiction* Vol. 33 Issue. 1 (Winter 1996), pp. 59 – 69, p. 60.

⁴⁹ Bidney, p. 61.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 62.

⁵¹ Ibid.

accompanied by the opening and closing of her dispatch case, Bidney, having solved the problem of Frederick's tears, 'snap[s] the case shut again' (486).

The readings I have touched on here each detect in Frederick's tears a secret: uncovering this enables them to locate the meaning of the story and resolve it; this, in turn, enables it to be categorised within Bowen's oeuvre, an oeuvre that is, as I have explored already, notoriously difficult to categorise. Underlying this project, then, is an interest in the ways reading emotion invites and resists the 'satisfactions of closure'⁵² that Bowen's texts disrupt. This is not to say these aren't fruitful readings. Lassner's observation that the story engages with a politics of maternal feeling points to a preoccupation with containment and contagion that draws a correspondence between this story and Catherine Lutz's observations about discourses of mothering touched on in Chapter One, registering the story's engagement with the rhetorics of gender and control that Lutz argues are always at work in discourses of emotion. Frederick's tears, for example, are designated as 'shameful', 'an offensive weakness', 'disgraceful', an 'incontinence' (481). The story corroborates a deployment of emotion as a disciplining mechanism that genders Frederick and his mother, not only when she tells him 'You really haven't got to be such a *baby*!' (482), but also when she is described as 'not the sort of woman you ought to see in a Park with a great blubbering boy belonging to her' (481) and when she admonishes Frederick with the implicit threat tears pose to masculinity: 'You know, I so often wonder what your father would think' (482). That Frederick's tears are a threat not only to 'Frederick' or 'Mrs Dickinson' but to their abilities to identify themselves *as* such and, along with this, the entire structure of gender, class, manners, and social order itself, is at work in Mrs Dickinson's own secret revelation:

⁵² Kermode, p. 88.

Once she had got so far as taking her pen up to write to the Mother's Advice Column of a helpful woman's weekly...She began: 'I am a widow; young, good tempered, and my friends all tell me that I have great control. But my little boy – ' She intended to sign herself 'Mrs D., Surrey.' But then she had stopped and thought no, no: after all, he is Topsy's son.' (481)

But for Lassner, the story is, importantly, a reparation: Frederick's 'cleft' signals the powerful effects of closure achieved by discovering, and reading the emotional history of his tears. Of the readings I've discussed, only Hermione Lee's registers the possibility that 'Tears, Idle Tears', like Frederick, may have 'just done a turn' (485).

While all these readings point to Frederick's tears as a cipher for the story's meaning, only Bidney and Lee remark on the cypher itself. For Bidney, the cypher proves the story's curative effect: it is resolved, along with Frederick's tears, into the cure the story provides. 'In a lakeside epiphany,' Bidney concludes, 'the story shows that there is hope for Frederick, and that this hope lies in a change from seeking attention to lending attention – preferably by attending to something that will not even flatter the perceiver by looking back...Only the wonderful, unseeing eye of the quirky duck remains'.⁵³ That this has been the resolution Bidney seeks is belied by how the 'cypher' has been reduced to a quirk – a comedic moment, perhaps, of Bowenesque irregularity – odd and unusual, but accidental, a dictional eccentricity. The cypher for Bidney is only proof that there is an emotional condition that has been solved. Yet this 'quirk' discloses the text's refusal to be solved, preserving in its background the comedic echo of 'quack'. Bidney's reading seems unaware of the effect of reading over the 'quirky duck', who continues to utter its cry through the very language used to defuse it, sounding on after its supposed closure. Lee, though touching only lightly on the story, mentions the duck in relation to what Sean O'Faolain called Bowen's

⁵³ Bidney, pp. 62-63.

‘language of undertones’: this ‘charged, discreet, versatile’ and ‘nervy’ quality, Lee observes, makes *things* ‘separate themselves from their owners’ and ‘seem to loom larger than life’: the ‘effect is phantasmagorical’.⁵⁴ For Lee, this effect is not accidental but rather the result of Bowen’s ‘typical ploy’ of displacing the story’s ‘emotional focus’.⁵⁵ Attending to the duck as not an eccentricity, but rather as part of what Bowen’s texts *do*, allows Lee to draw out of the cypher the way Bowen’s short fictions resist interpretation precisely by inviting it: certainly Lee’s observation of the haunting affect of such ‘displacement’ helps us to think about how the cypher invites reading, not only through its unusual spelling.⁵⁶ We may recall that when the duck ‘rolled one eye open over a curve, something unseeing in its expression calmed him’ (483). For Bidney this is the point of Bowen’s story: ducking the strangeness of this figure, the duck’s ‘unseeing expression’ punctuates the recuperative effect of looking objectively at what tears mean. Lee’s reading, which acknowledges that the despair the story exposes ‘may not be understood’⁵⁷, begins to question the clarity of this unseeing expression. For Lee, however, the duck is but a decoy: redirecting the emotional focus of the story, the duck still speaks the secrets Frederick and Mrs Dickinson can’t. Lee, too, in her own way insists upon closure.

⁵⁴Sean O’Faolin, *The Short Story* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1972), p. 240, cited in Lee, p. 140. Amongst the examples Lee cites are the rocking horse in ‘The Last Night in the Old Home’, a manicure set in ‘Songs My Father Sang Me’, and table-linens in ‘Sunday Afternoon’. See Lee, pp. 140-142.

⁵⁵ Sean O’Faolin, cited by Lee, p. 140.

⁵⁶ While outside the scope of this project, this play of fowl, whether in the form of game-birds or the larger category of ‘feathered vertebrate animals’ (OED Online for ‘fowl’), repeats across Bowen’s stories. Observing the animalistic at work in Bowen’s writing, Bennett and Royle note several moments in her novels where people are figured as ducks (Bennett and Royle, p. 67). This extends to Bowen’s short fiction, such as when, in ‘The Happy Autumn Fields’, Sarah only ever awakes in early mornings to Henrietta’s ‘birdlike stirrings’ (CS: 672). Yet birds are also figured *like* birds, such as the escapee in ‘The Parrott’ whose recapture entails a decline so disturbing to its young captor that she ‘put down its cage quickly and walked over to the window. It was like the crowing of the cock’ (CS: 123). In ‘I Hear You Say So’, plot itself is supplemented by the circulations of a nightingale’s song whose movements contract the unrelated lives of Londoners ‘a week after V.E. day’ (CS: 751). This work of circulation traces a correspondence between this story and Bowen’s novel *The Death of Heart*, in which, as Maud Ellmann observes, Robert Pidgeon’s name lends him both the status of the ‘commonest of flying vermin’ and ‘the theme of circulation’ (Ellmann, p. 173, n12). See Ellmann, p. 137 for other birds and animals.

⁵⁷ Lee, p. 147.

Yet, if we extend Lee's observation, this duck's strange expression returns another tear; this time the anatomical peculiarity of a duck's translucent nictitating membrane. From 'nictitare', to 'wink' or 'blink', this 'third eye-lid', sweeps across the eye sideways, starting from the side near the beak, to moisten and clean the eye.⁵⁸ If the duck helps us to locate the emotional focus of the story, then its 'unseeing expression' suggests it does so with a wink. Scrutinising the very readings it offers, Bowen's 'cypher' contracts the literary, physiological and critical topographies of emotion that 'Tears, Idle Tears' *might* unfold with reading into the very problem of reading emotion: reading 'tears' tears at the security of their reading. The intensity of this correspondence to what Derrida discerns as the 'law of the cipher'⁵⁹, not only registers at work in Bowen's story the 'crypt-effect' of the literary – that, as Nicholas Royle observes, the cipher does not 'offer...itself simply as "a critical tool" but a tool if one can still use that word, of the other, of alterity and otherness in general'⁶⁰ – but it does so with a tear. In his discussion of the crypt-effect, Royle makes a 'case for a cryptaesthetics of literature', one that would touch on the 'telepathic capacity of the text to see us coming, read *us*, determining us and our strange inclusion, cryptaesthetically working over our "own" language, working over us, *ourselves*.'⁶¹ What I am proposing is that Bowen's short fiction makes a case for a cryptaesthetics of emotion. 'Tears, Idle Tears' exemplifies Maud Ellmann's observation that Bowen's fiction 'interprets its

⁵⁸See the OED Online definition for 'nictitating'. This animal tear recurs in 'The Parrot'. At the moment of capture, the fugitive parrot has a 'gleam of intelligence in its eye' that seems to speak: ' "Take me," it seemed to say. "I am an old sick bird, beaten out and weary. I have aspired and failed – it is finished. Take me." A white sheath rolled up over its eyes; its feathers drooped' (CS: 116). Yet this acquiescence is a scam, an effect of misreading the parrot's eyes. Lulling its captor into false security, the parrot escapes to the roofline.

⁵⁹ Jacques Derrida, 'Fors: The English Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok' trans. By Barbara Johnson in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* trans. by Nicholas Rand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. xixlviii, p. xxxix.

⁶⁰Nicholas Royle, in 'Cryptaesthesia: The Case of Wuthering Heights' in *Telepathy and Literature: Essays on the Reading Mind* (Blackwell: Place, Year), pp.28-62, p. 32-33.

⁶¹ Royle, p.61.

interpreters'; reading Bowen, she cautions, is 'a risky enterprise, for Bowen's fiction is "a trap baited with beauty," which constantly outsmarts the interpretive methods brought to bear on it'.⁶² Yet Bowen's 'Tears, Idle Tears' intersects Ellmann's caution about reading Bowen, with a caution about reading emotion: this trap is set, and springs, with feeling.

With its appeal to notions of secrecy, ciphers and textual affect, 'Tears, Idle Tears' extends to Bowen's short fiction what both Bennett and Royle, and Ellmann, have observed as the 'crypt-effects' or effects of 'encryptment' at work in Bowen's novels, which anticipate the 'psychoanalytic and deconstructive methods' they invite.⁶³ Bowen's fictions, Ellmann remarks, 'rarely unfold chronologically, but tend to psychoanalyse themselves, tracing present crises to past causes'.⁶⁴ For Ellmann, this is a kind of 'incubism', a boxing in of the past in the present.⁶⁵ This is at work in the structures of Bowen's novels, such as the central flashback to the past in *The Little Girls*, which creates a kind of incubisim at the level of Bowen's oeuvre by summoning the 'envelope structure' of *The House in Paris* in which, Ellmann writes, ' "The Past" is boxed into the coffin of "The Present"'.⁶⁶ But it is also at work in the circulation of letters and other objects, and Ellmann develops the ways Bowen's writing traces reading as irrevocably bound with the promises and resistances of encryptment, of disincubing what is incubed. In their study, Bennett and Royle trace the ways Bowen's

⁶² Ellmann, p.4.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 17.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

⁶⁵ Ellmann gleans the term 'incubism' from *Ulysses*, and draws out the way it invokes not only being 'boxed in' but also 'hatching or laying', as well as the incubus: 'The word "incubism" therefore brings together ideas of sleep, death, and sexuality. It has to do with incubating that which is incubed, or reinvigorating that which is encoffined, as well as with the dreams gestating in the womb of sleep' (177). Bowen's 1929 story 'The Cat Jumps', which I go on to discuss in this chapter, uncannily anticipates Ellmann's reading when it describes the Wright family's attitude to their haunted house: 'In their practical way, the Wrights now set out to expel, live out, live down, almost (had the word had place in their vocabulary) to "lay" the Bentley's' (CS: 363).

⁶⁶ Ellmann, p. 117.

‘texts are traversed by crypt-effects’ to elaborate a ‘cryptanalysis of reading’ – a study of ‘reading as itself the haunting of a crypt-effect’.⁶⁷ This is what ‘might lead to an acknowledgement of the idea that there is fiction at the origin, that there is no clinical or any other purportedly real context which is not worked over, cut up in advance by fiction, by literarity, by otherness’.⁶⁸ Recent scholarship has developed these observations to consider Bowen’s writing of trauma but, although I can only be suggestive with regard to trauma itself⁶⁹, I want to suggest that ‘Tears, Idle Tears’ figures what Bennett and Royle call a ‘traumaturgy’, or reading of the wound, that undercuts any reading of the short stories as dramatising a trauma that would find a meaning for the present emotional crises in the emotional causes of the past to offer a recuperative reading or exhumation. Instead, emotion itself might be thought of as a kind of traumaturgy, a wound whose secret is its literariness. At stake in this is the fictionality of the very self that emotion is supposed to express, the subject emotion is supposed to signify through its expressions. Ellmann remarks that *A World of Love* and *The Little Girls* ‘show that the lost object must be disincubed in order to be laid to rest: the work of mourning can begin only when the crypt is shattered and its secrets are released’.⁷⁰ ‘Tears, Idle Tears’, however, suggests that when it comes to emotion, this disincubation is only a consolation, an act of reparation rather than an exhumation itself.

⁶⁷ Bennett and Royle, p. 45.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ A full discussion of trauma theory is beyond the scope of this project and, as my discussion of cinema hopes to show, my interest here is not in trauma theory itself but, as I will go on to discuss in Chapter Three, the ways trauma theories open out of what are perceived to be perceptual shocks inaugurated by technology’s disaggregation of motion and emotion. Instead, my interest throughout the project is that what underlies this shock is not a separation from the subject, but a recognition that emotion does not secure the boundaries of the subject. The non-subjectivity of emotion is a kind of trauma. For recent discussions of trauma in Bowen’s work, please see Eluned Summers-Bremner’s ‘Dead letters and living things: historical ethics in *The House in Paris* and *The Death of the Heart*’ and Shafquat Towheed’s essay, with which I engage in Chapter Four, ‘Territory, space, modernity: Elizabeth Bowen’s *The Demon Lover* and *Other Stories* and wartime London’ both in Susan Osborn, *Elizabeth Bowen: New Critical Perspectives* (Cork University Press: Cork, 2009). See also Jessica Gildersleeve’s recent doctoral thesis *Elizabeth Bowen and the Writing of Trauma* (University of Bristol, 2009).

⁷⁰ Ellmann, p. 178.

Reading Frederick's tears, we secrete his secret, so as to preserve our own. There is no cure for this – this is how we go on feeling.

Incubisms accumulate across Bowen's novels to the extent that these begin to thicken into an accretion that Maud Ellmann suggests 'verges on the passionate hoarding that Freud associates with anal eroticism'.⁷¹ Ellmann's remark merges passion and incubism or encryptomment into a fascination with feeling that points forward to the discussion I undertake in Chapter Four, where I draw on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Renu Bora's theorisations of feeling and texture, which they also develop through attention to anal eroticism and Henry James' 'fascination with the image of a hand that penetrates a rectum and disimpacts or "fishes out" the treasure imagined as collecting'.⁷² What I want to note here however is that crucial to the work of 'disimpacting' is that the satisfaction of analytic disclosure is not produced by discovery, but by the textures, or feeling, of searching; this, in turn confirms the productivity of that feeling. It is this very kind of productivity (pleasurable or otherwise) that I suggest preoccupies Bowen's short fiction, whose 'vital fortuity' implies the form's invitation to reading with its emotion: 'The sought-about-for subject gives the story a dead kernel, however skilfully words may have been applied... The story should have the valid central emotion and inner spontaneity of the lyric; it should magnetize the imagination and give pleasure – of however disturbing, painful or

⁷¹ Ellmann cites Dinah's catalogues in *The Little Girls* and also refers to Bowen's own 'compulsive lists and inventories', and her emphasis on things in *Seven Winters* (197-198). Bennett and Royle's reading of lists and collecting in *The Little Girls* offers a sensitivity to the importance of feeling when they pick out what Dinah articulates as the business of Mopsie Pie – the prefabrication of feeling: 'There's a tremendous market for prefabricated feelings: customers simply can't snap them up fast enough. They feel they carry some guarantee. Nothing's so fishy to most people as any kind of feeling they've never heard of' (167). Dinah's speech demystifies the business of consumer society and, along with it, the 'paradox of the postmodern simulacrum': 'in postmodernism, the simulacrum is only ever the copy of a copy. There is an indefinite deferral back to a past which is empty, like a coffer. Fabricated objects, and the feelings that they produce, are always already copies, prefabrications' (Bennett and Royle, p. 130).

⁷² Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p.13.

complex a kind'.⁷³ Not only do Bowen's stories, I suggest, make a 'case' for the literariness of emotion, reminding us that emotion falls under the law of the case study, but it also implies a correspondence between the work of analysis and the work of emotion. That the short story's feeling corresponds to the work of analysis is intensified when Bowen introduces the *Demon Lover* stories as 'cases': 'the past, in all these cases, discharges its load of feeling into the anaesthetized and bewildered present'.⁷⁴ The stories become a 'case' for emotion, figuring the short fiction as another 'passionate hoard' of incubisms within Bowen's oeuvre, distinguished by their offerings of emotion. Rather than subsume emotion *to* analysis, however, the stories instead actuate it: as Bowen writes, these cases 'counteract fear by fear, stress by stress'.⁷⁵

Bowen's remark taps into the history of the short story, which, as Mary Louise Pratt observes, can trace its status as an 'exemplum' or 'illustration' back to biblical practice, and, more recently, the short narrative in 18th century periodicals, 'where it merges with the essay'.⁷⁶ Much of Bowen's short fiction deploys structural envelopes, which we can think of as what Karl-Heinz Stierle calls the 'frame' of the case story.⁷⁷ Those that follow the 1935 *House in Paris*, such as 'Tears, Idle Tears', 'Ivy Gripped the Steps', 'The Happy Autumn Fields', 'The Inherited Clock', and 'Songs My Father Sang Me', as well as the uncompleted 'Home for Christmas', offer a collection of variations

⁷³ Elizabeth Bowen, Preface to 'Faber Book of Modern Stories' in Charles E. May, *The New Short Story Theory* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994), pp. 256-262, p.260 (originally published 1950).

⁷⁴ Preface to '*The Demon Lover and Other Stories*' in *MT*, p. 98. I will return to this quotation in Chapter Four to consider the relationship between past and present in more detail.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁷⁶ Mary Louise Pratt, 'The Short Story: The Long and the Short of it' in Charles E. May, *The New Short Story Theory* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994), pp.91-113, p. 103. See also Heinz Stierle (note below).

⁷⁷ See Karl-Heinz Stierle, 'Story as Exemplum – Exemplum as Story' in Charles E. May, *The New Short Story Theory* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994), pp. 15-43. 'Frame' lends to the case the senses that this discussion touches on: it is 'a manner of construction', an 'order' or 'form of reasoning', an 'emotional disposition' ('frame of mind'), a lie or falsification ('to frame'), and the edge of a spectacle lens, photograph etc.

on an unfolding of the present that reveals its past.⁷⁸ Earlier, in 'The Apple Tree' a young married woman is haunted by a classmate's suicide, and in 'The Needlecase' a seamstress reveals the illegitimate son that will haunt her employers' family.⁷⁹ 'The Disinherited' offers a rare instance of first person narration in Bowen's short fiction that appears to open out the secrets suggested by the un-readability, the impersonality, of a chauffeur's face: 'always shadowless, abstract, null; a face remembered as being unmemorable. The only look he gave you was level and unmoving'.⁸⁰ Burning candles late into the night, Prothero continues to disturb his employer, and the reader, by confounding the comprehensive potential of reading to reveal what is behind his face. At the centre of the story we move with the powers of omniscience into his private quarters to see that he spends his nights writing; we then move into the writing itself, into the first person mode of confession that should secure the veracity of what is revealed. Summoning the rush of Frederick's tears, Prothero's writing deploys the fluid dynamic of an interiority subject to an expression, that, by expressing, has the capacity to confirm a 'person' behind the face:

His hand with the twitching pen went rushing from line to line at a fever-high pace. He did not once pause. The pen rushed the hand along under some terrific compulsion, as though something, not thought, vital, were being drained out of him through the point of the pen. Words sprang to their places with deadly complicity, knowing each other too well. (392)

Shifting into the first person, Prothero's writing spills as if unmediated his secret past: that he murdered his lover and fled to France, where he killed a man and assumed his identity to become Prothero, the chauffeur. At the heart of Prothero's interior, however,

⁷⁸ 'The Happy Autumn Fields' in *CS*, pp. 668-670; 'The Inherited Clock' in *CS*, pp. 623-640; 'Ivy Gripped the Steps' in *CS*, pp. 686-711; 'Songs My Father Sang Me' in *CS*, pp. 650-660; and 'Home for Christmas' in *B*, pp. 309-319.

⁷⁹ 'The Apple Tree' (*CS*, pp. 461-470) was first published in Cynthia Asquith's 1931 edited collection *When Churchyards Yawn: Fifteen New Ghost Stories* (London: Hutchinson) and 'The Needlecase' (*CS*, pp. 453-460) was first published in Bowen's 1934 collection *The Cat Jumps* (London: Victor Gollancz).

⁸⁰ 'The Disinherited' in *CS*, pp. 375-407, p. 380. 'The Disinherited' was first published in Bowen's 1934 collection *The Cat Jumps* (London: Victor Gollancz). Subsequent references are provided in-text.

he remains a fiction. Withholding any disclosure of who he *really* is, Prothero's letter rushes towards an accretion or thickness of syntactical and dictional slippage that resonates with Susan Osborn's description of Bowen's writing as a 'Braille-like tangibility...[a] strange materiality...more often associated with plastic arts than written, arts in which we more often find a salient concern with the relation between flatness and depth'.⁸¹ This for Osborn evokes the unsettling movements effected by the texture of language itself, that Bowen's style 'realizes itself not solely to be looked *through* but as a style to be looked *at* as well; what is unsettling about her stories is as much a function of its surface as it is of the various depths it conceals'.⁸² Evoking the trickiness of writing, Prothero's writing textures the depth effects of revealing through feeling itself. Spending this rush of feeling and writing, the text climaxes in an involution of subjectivity, writing and feeling that irrevocably compromises readerly hopes for introspection and the satisfactions of disclosure:

If I were to write, '*I love you, I cannot bear this, I want you, come back*' – you might be tricked. You might come back to see me see you, then you would see me not see you, you would unthink the thought you thought under the pillow, as much as you thought. Yes, look, if I tricked you this way, you'd come back, you could not not come back, you could never resist that. Yes, so look, I'll trick you I'll write loud, like a scream would be if anyone was in the dark with nothing (but I am not in the dark) I'll write so loud you will hear though you can't hear, *Anita* – (397)⁸³

⁸¹ Susan Osborn, 'Reconsidering Elizabeth Bowen' in *Modern Fiction Studies* 52.1 (2006), pp.187-197, p. 193.

⁸² Osborn, 2006, p. 194.

⁸³ Prothero's writing here might be thought of in terms of Susan Cataldi's reading of Merleau-Ponty's reversibility of flesh as a kind of 'perplexing mobility' of language, emotion and perception (Susan Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh: A Study of Sensitive Space – Reflections on Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Embodiment* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993)). Merleau-Ponty points to reversibility as 'the finger of the glove that is turned inside out – There is no need of a spectator who would be *on each side*. It suffices that from one side I see the wrong side of the glove that is applied to the right side, that I touch the one *through* the other' (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingus (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1968, p.136, cited in Cataldi, p.110). For Cataldi, this 'reversibility thesis' not only helps us to understand how emotions never involve simply one emotion, but summon their 'others' and their other contiguities at once, but in doing so they summon the subject-object relations they appear to endorse: 'concepts such as 'inside' and 'outside'...lose their sense...mov[ing] from 'inside' to 'outside' and 'outside' to 'inside' in

On the verge of revealing Anita, the story tears us out of this sense of immediacy, itself an effect of writing, and out of 'Prothero'. The narrator intervenes, and Prothero's 'pen charged in his hand. Dragging his hand down to the foot of the paper, in staggering charging characters it wrote – *'Anita, I love you Anita, Anita, where are you?'* (397). As if awakened by the narrator, Prothero 'gathered up by feel the close-written sheets.....flung open the lid of the stove with a pothook and thrust the papers in...So his nights succeeded each other' (398). Whether it is Prothero or Anita who 'becomes' each night, their becoming is an effect of the textures and feeling of writing that touches back on itself through a series of knotted doublings and syntactical foldings, materialising what appears to be disclosed through the productions of discourse, of writing and reading effects. Prothero's writing undoes what it is supposed to verify – a self behind his expression.

'The Disinherited' suggests a fascination with the affects of reading that is also at work in the haunting effects of Bowen's 1929 story 'The Cat Jumps'; but here it is registered with a scepticism about the potential for analysis to diagnose, rather than produce, its objects of study.⁸⁴ The Harold Wrights take over a house in which Harold Bentley murdered his wife. The Harold Wrights, however,

...were not deterred. They had light, bright, shadowless, thoroughly disinfected minds. They believed that they disbelieved in most things but were unprejudiced; they enjoyed frank discussions. They dreaded nothing but inhibitions; they had no inhibitions. They were pious agnostics, earnest for social reform; they explained everything to their children, and were annoyed to find their children could not sleep at nights because they thought there was a complex under the bed. They

one continuous motion. Insides turn into outsides and vice versa...For Merleau-Ponty this perplexing mobility comes not from some inattention or trick: it is the norm' (Cataldi, pp. 110-111).

⁸⁴ 'The Cat Jumps' (CS, pp. 362-370) was, according to Marcia Farrell's bibliography, first published in Cynthia Asquith (Ed.), *Shudders: A Collection of New Nightmare Tales* (London: Hutchinson, 1929), pp. 119 – 132.

knew all crime to be pathological, and read their murders only in scientific books. (362)

The Harold Wrights' analyses and discourses, which they had meant to employ in 'their practical way...to expel, live out, live down...to 'lay' the Bentley's' (363), do not lay the Bentleys to rest, however, but summons them.

When they have friends for the weekend, diagnosis and pathologisation lose definition: like the fabric of Mrs Wright's 'wrap', their 'feathered edges crept a little' (368). The Wrights' 'intelligent discussions' (365), diagnoses of 'sex-antagonism' (365), their healthy children that 'never had been repressed' (364), and their 'being natural' (365) all begin to slip, and the language of diagnosis opens out, spreading across the text to destabilise, rather than secure, the boundaries between the discourse of analysis, and its object, between the Harold Wrights and the Harold Bentleys. Without these securities, personality and persons lose coherence: '... on the intelligent sharp-featured faces all round the table something – perhaps simply a clearness – seemed to be lacking, as though these were wax faces for one fatal instant exposed to a furnace.... You would have said that each personality had been attacked by some kind of decomposition' (366). Losing clarity, the light becomes 'a film', 'smoke-like', 'creeping', 'thinning', 'darkening' (366). Without its definitions, they are brought into contact with the tenuousness of their distinctions: '“If you can see,” said Harold, “Something seems to be going wrong with the light.”... They had noticed, but each with a proper dread of his own subjectivity, had not spoken' (366). As both an extreme fear or apprehension about the future, as well as a doubt (a fear of something being 'proved otherwise'), dread registers an irreducible 'incubism' of emotion and the work of

reading.⁸⁵ As Bennett and Royle remark, dread is a ‘kind of reading...the deferred arrival of an event which can never be known but only conceived, apprehended, dreaded. But dread has, therefore, always arrived already’.⁸⁶ Dread’s work is a ‘final figuration of traumaturgy: the work of reading, of the wound, is structured by the temporal and cognitive displacements of dread’.⁸⁷ Not only the work of time or thought, however, dread is also the work of feeling. As a ‘shrinking apprehension’, dread is a recoiling from touch whose contact with what it apprehends is, also, always missed through an infinitely doubled movement towards and away: what dread apprehends, it apprehends with a shudder, what it appears to cohere, it also keeps open.⁸⁸ In ‘The Cat Jumps’, the immediacy of feeling as a guarantor for the boundaries of the subject is, along with the light, thinning, creeping, blurring. In the house of the Harold Wrights, no one knows whether they are coming or going: they are living dread – yet they go on living. At this point in the story the reference library, installed because Harold’s ‘friends hated to discuss without basis’ (366), loses its critical authority: the ‘library stools, rugs and divans’ are ‘strewn’ with volumes of ‘Krafft-Ebing, Freud, Forel, Weiniger and the heterosexual volume of Havelock Ellis’(366). Medicine, philosophy, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and neurology are merged into an indiscriminate oeuvre whose cases cannot contain Bentley’s ‘*crime passionel*’ (365), and these are added to the collection of ‘paper-knives and small pieces of modern statuary’ (366) that press them open.

⁸⁵ The Oxford English Dictionary Online lists the following senses for dread (noun): ‘extreme fear; deep awe or reverence; apprehension or anxiety as to future events’; ‘a person or thing (to be) dreaded; an object or cause of fear, reverence, or awe’; ‘doubt, risk of the think proving otherwise’. The definition for its verb characterises dread as a ‘shrinking apprehension’.

⁸⁶ Bennett and Royle, p. 61. Their discussion considers the proliferation of ‘dread’ in *The House in Paris*.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ As Sara Ahmed remarks, ‘emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place. So emotions are not simply something ‘I’ or ‘we’ have. Rather, it is through emotions...that surfaces or boundaries are made: the ‘I’ and the ‘we’ are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others’ (10).

Yet the ghosts of Harold and Lucinda Bentley are not released but, like Prothero's Anita, summoned, produced by the disclosures of Muriel Barker. Her name resonating with the speech of both the mad and the animal, Muriel Barker mobilises the deconstructive threats of emotion, whose history of distinctions between passive and active, cognitive and physical, primitive and civilised, derange the boundaries between the rational and irrational, sane and mad, human and animal. With an almost preternatural apprehension, it 'was remarkable how much Muriel knew' (366).⁸⁹ Revealing the secrets of the case of the Bentley murder one by one in a slow disassembly of Mrs Bentley, Muriel trails the narrative thread of the murder, like Lucinda's body parts, across the story, room by room, moving through the house until the atmosphere feels, as did the house after the murder, 'sticky' (367). Muriel reveals the final touch: 'He put her heart in her hat-box. He said it belonged in there' (367). Displacing even the heart from its proper place, Muriel's story impels the group to finally go to bed where at last they are 'given up to terror' (368). The instabilities and slippages that have dripped, dragged, crept, trailed, shed, and shivered throughout the text bring Jocelyn and Lucinda, Harold and Harold, face to face in dread, dissolving their distinctions at last:

With a strange rueful smile, like an actress, Jocelyn, skirting the foot of the two beds, approached the door of the bathroom. 'At

⁸⁹For example, Muriel explains that Harold Bentley was hanged because his defence, the crime of passion, failed: 'He didn't really subscribe to it. He said having done what he wanted was worth anything' (367). For an excellent study of the ways in which the crime of passion indexes the ways emotions can involve discourses of responsibility, yet, crucially, rely on a naturalisation of passion, see James Averill's 'An Analysis of Psychophysiological Symbolism & its Influence on Theories of Emotion', where he compares criminal passion to the Papua New Guinean emotion of 'being like a wild pig'. Only affecting young men with pressing and unavoidable social obligations, and explained as being bitten by a ghost, the perceived passivity of being like a wild pig is important because it enables a mitigation of responsibility both for the 'victim' and for the community that responds by reassessing social obligation. For Averill, 'being like a wild pig' and 'crimes of passion' demonstrate the ways emotion can be a 'way of realigning social obligations within the community, while still proscribing any deliberate deviation from the established norms' – crucially, this demonstrates the discursive intersection of passivity and activity entailed by passion (James Averill, 'An Analysis of Psychophysiological Symbolism & its Influence on Theories of Emotion' in Gerrod Harré and Rom Parrott (Eds.), *The Emotions: Social, Cultural and Biological Dimensions* (London: Sage, 1996), pp. 204-228, p. 223-224).

least I have still...my feet.' For some time the heavy body of Mrs Bentley, tenacious of life, had been dragging itself from room to room. '*Harold!*' she said to the silence, face close to the door.

The door opened on Harold, looking more dreadfully at her than she had imagined. With a quick, vague movement he roused himself from his meditation. Therein he had assumed the entire burden of Harold Bentley...The Harolds, superimposed on each other, stood searching the bedroom strangely. Taking a step forward, shutting the door behind him:

'Here we are,' said Harold.

Jocelyn went down heavily. Harold watched. (369)

Jocelyn's faint releases Harold, but faces him with a more urgent and chilling apprehension: he, and the other inhabitants, are locked in their rooms. Having, since the beginning 'noticed something about Edward Cartaret...a kind of insane glitter...utterly pathological' (368) Muriel Barker has, on her way to bed, 'turned all the keys on the outside, impartially. She did not know which door might be Edward Cartaret's. Muriel was a woman who took no chances' (370). Having pathologised – read and diagnosed – Edward, Muriel's security of closure slips: her analysis has produced what she thought she'd contained.

'The Cat Jumps' stages the very discourses of diagnosis that it invites. Engaging with the practices and methods of analysis whose volumes and dictions it enfold within its narrative, it anticipates the readings these might produce. In this ghost story, it is the languages and methods of analysis, rather than the supernatural, that turn out to generate the haunting affects of the story. Indexing the relationship between the short story and the case, 'The Cat Jumps' also registers the proximity of the short story *to* the case study. Disturbing the boundaries between the scientific and the literary, between the explanative and the affective, the diagnostic and productive, 'The Cat Jumps' materialises what Mary Louise Pratt describes as the short story's 'conspicuous points

of contact between imaginative literature and other kinds of discourse'.⁹⁰ The story is not simply a scepticism or critique of analysis, but an acute engagement with the reading effects – the textual affects – of analysis. In this sense, I want to suggest that at work in Bowen's short fiction is a case study of the case study: these stories re-read the possibility for analysis to produce anything other than a literary reading, particularly when it comes to reading people through their feelings.

I want to close this case of the literariness of emotion, then, by suggesting that, encased within the cases of Bowen's short stories there is another hoard: of cases themselves. Opening and closing with alarming regularity, these suggest the disclosures of those to whom they are attached, an expression of their persons. Yet in each case, these reveal, as Bennett and Royle suggest of *The Little Girls*, only prefabrications, allusions to a self rather than confirmations⁹¹ that offer a collection of empty interiorities. In 'The Easter Egg Party', Hermione wants a 'green celluloid box to keep her toothbrush in' (CS: 532); when her guardian, who 'did not approve of buying hearts with small gifts' refuses to buy it, Hermione 'gave the green box a last look, the first fully human look she had spent on anything' (532). In 'Mrs Moysey', a great-aunt is suspected of being a tippler; left in charge of two children, these are at first kept at arm's length, then 'engulfed in the innermost secrecy of that secret house' (CS: 339). When their 'complexions, manners, tempers were beginning to deteriorate' (339) the cause is traced to Mrs Moysey's accumulation of chocolate boxes, their contents gorged for the sake of 'a collection' spurred by her appetite for a 'feeling for beautiful things' (344). In one of Bowen's later stories, 'Candles in the Window', a girl prepares for her first ball. To commemorate her first coming out, a ritual of 'becoming', her Aunt Kay gives her a purse:

⁹⁰ Pratt, p. 103.

⁹¹ Bennett and Royle, p. 130; see also footnote 70 of this chapter.

she brought from the wardrobe, undid from its tissue wrappings, a little purse – or, more exactly, reticule...The lining was of delicate sea-blue taffeta. “*Oh!*” I cried, overcome. “It’s not new,” she pointed out. And indeed as I held it nearer the candles, I saw the silk was faded, the silver tarnished. “No, old – how could it not be? It has a story. Mine.” (B:199)

This sense of unfolding a person from a case materialises, perhaps most dramatically, in ‘Making Arrangements’.⁹² Hewson Blair prepares to read a letter sent by his wife Margery, who has left him. In a series of folding and unfoldings, Margery exists only in her textures, only through the feeling of Hewson Blair. About to read the letter, Hewson stands ‘with his back to the fire...Then he let Margery out of the envelope’ (171). Writing that she ‘never quite knew what you wanted me for’ (171), Margery asks him to send her dresses. Her letter initiates a revealing of Hewson’s interior, which, it turns out, is made out of feeling for Margery: ‘Many people had, indeed, admired Margery, which gratified Hewson who had married her. Many more people praised her clothes, which still further gratified Hewson who had paid for them. When he married Margery he stamped himself as a man of taste’ (172). What Hewson wants Margery for is her impressions: ‘Margery was becoming to him’ (173). Not only do the dresses fabricate Margery, rather than express her, but they offer textures for feeling through which Hewson can feel himself feeling; her ‘becoming’ allows him to read himself. It is as if Margery is the medium through which Hewson expresses himself. When he opens her wardrobe, from ‘the dusk within, cedar-scented and cavernous, Margery leaped out to him again as she had leaped up out of the envelope. There were so many Margerys in there, phalanx on phalanx’ (175). Coming to life, the fabrics, and fabrications, of Margery are clinging, sweeping, irritating, touching him: they ‘seemed to follow him’ (175). The dresses threaten to enfold him, and when he tears the red dress in which

⁹² ‘Making Arrangements’ (CS, pp. 170-179) was first published in *Everybody’s Magazine*, Vol. 50, No.6 (June 1924). Subsequent citations from CS are provided in-text.

Margery was most becoming to him, he ‘quailed a little, feeling the quick storm of her wrath about him’(176), then ‘gripped the folds in both hands and tore’ (177). Losing the Margery through which he discerns himself, Hewson murders ‘Margery’:

Without these dresses the inner Margery, unfostered, would never have become perceptible to the world. She would have been like a page of music written never to be played. All her delightfulness to her friends had been in this expansion of herself into forms and colours...Hewson expressed this to himself concisely and heavily, as a man should, as he stood looking down at the bed, half smiling, and said, ‘She has committed suicide.’ (177)

Touching the coolness of the folds, the ‘creamy stuff that trickled icily away between his fingers’ (178), Hewson fingers the pile of dresses on the bed: ‘It seemed to him, as he softly, inexorably approached them, that the swirls, rivers, and luxuriance of silk and silver, fur and lace and velvet, shuddered as he came’ (178). Shuddering, the dresses ‘tremble with dread’ (178), and yet Hewson cannot stop their feeling: ‘The silks – they seemed still sentient – quivered under his touch; the velvets lay there sullenly...’ (178). Having taken Margery out of the envelope, and out of her wardrobe, he packs the torn tissues of her into a trunk.

We can trace similar work of cases, folding and unfolding, revealing and concealing, in the hat keeper of ‘Ann Lee’s’, whose haberdashery specialises in anticipating the desires of its clientele, offering the perfect ‘expressive green’ (CS: 103). In ‘The Evil that Men Do –’, a woman replies to an invitation from a would-be lover. Seeming to be on the verge of accepting and arranging a liaison, she writes that ‘ – Of course my husband has never entered into my inner life’ (86). But the letter is interrupted by her husband, who brings her the gift of a handbag. Encountering the pleasures of the ‘silk folds’ (88) of its interior, its collection of a little notebook and gilt mirror, she returns to her letter. Where before her potential lover had begun to touch her with his letter’s promise of an interior life, her reply now concludes, inflected by the

gift: ‘You must not think that I do not love my husband. There are moments when he touches very closely my *exterior life*’ (88). And, in ‘Tears, Idle Tears’, the story accents the beginning and ending of Frederick’s encounter with the bespectacled girl – the reading of tears – with the opening and closing of a ‘despatch case’. In each of these cases, people are unfolded, opened out as if to reveal their interiority; yet this interiority turns out to be fictional, an enfolding of reading rather than the unfolding of a subject whose expressions can be read. Registering a preoccupation with the invitation people, like texts, offer to reading, the stories also turn around the ways these resist interpretation. In so doing, they destabilise the boundaries between the case study, and the short story, rendering the distinction between these as only a matter of feeling.

Chapter Three:

‘Nobody illustrates now, I wonder whether they could’: Motion, Pictures and Fictional Feeling in the Short Fiction of Elizabeth Bowen

At the end of 1939, Elizabeth Bowen re-read Maupassant.¹ Finding the process ‘rather brutalising’, one story stood out. Although ‘particularly preposterous’, Maupassant’s ‘Yvette’ offers something for Bowen: ‘Looking at the pictures which are so good and open sort of windows in the writing, I wondered whether illustrations were such a bad thing. Nobody illustrates now, I wonder whether they could’.² If, for Bowen, illustrations ‘open sort of windows’ in Maupassant’s writing, her remarks have a doubled effect for her contemporary reader, as if her very sense of the potential of these illustrations may open its own sort of window, framing an invitation to read the pictures in *her* writing.

Certainly, Bowen’s attention to these illustrations foregrounds scholarly interest in the visual at work in her writing. Bowen herself remarks that, ‘[e]mbarking on my first story...already I had failed to be a poet; I was in the course of failing to be a painter’.³ Victoria Glendenning describes how Bowen had as a child preferred drawing to writing, and it was her plans to be an artist that first brought Bowen to London. After two terms at the LCC School of Art in Southampton Row in London, however, Bowen was ‘disillusioned. At fourteen she had been considered very good – but she had never got, nor would now get, any better. She gave up, but she regretted the lost gift, and

¹ Bowen writes about reading Maupassant in her letter dated January 5th, 1940, to Virginia Woolf (Monks House Papers, Virginia Woolf Archives, University of Sussex Library Special Collections).

² Letter dated January 5th, 1940, p. 4.

³ Bowen’s remark introduces her second edition of her collection *Encounters* (in *MT*, pp. 118-121, p. 118). First published by Sidgwick and Jackson in 1923, *Encounters* was reprinted in by Sidgwick & Jackson in 1949 and was accompanied by Bowen’s preface.

transferred its qualities to writing'.⁴ Bowen affirms this in her own writing, which she described as 'verbal painting'.⁵ The interest Maupassant's pictures – these story illustrations – hold for Bowen, then, not only registers her interest in the viscosity of writing, but more specifically recalls her insistence on the particularity of the visual to the short story. It was a writer's appeal to vision that often elicited Bowen's approval, such as her admiration for how, in Katherine Mansfield's short fiction, 'the external picture came...first. She found herself seized upon by a scene...Appearances could in themselves touch alight her creative power'.⁶ Bowen would eventually go on to introduce her own stories, collected in *The Demon Lover and Other Stories* and those in *The Ivy Gripp'd the Steps*, as 'disjected snapshots'.⁷ Later, in her introduction to the second edition of her first collection, *Encounters*, Bowen would find much to criticise, but what she liked was 'a striking visual clarity...sense and feeling seldom bog down in words'.⁸

Bowen's reading of her own work appears, here, to invite a critical distinction *between* the visual and emotional for readers of her short fiction, and Victoria Glendenning observes Bowen's remark that her stories are 'a matter of vision rather

⁴ Victoria Glendenning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer* (London: Phoenix Publishers, 1977), p. 41. See also Phyllis Lassner, *Women Writers: Elizabeth Bowen* (London: MacMillan, 1990), p.10.

⁵ Glendenning, p. 41. Glendenning quotes Bowen: 'It seems to me that often when I write I am trying to make words to the work of line and colour. I have the painter's sensitivity to light. Much (and perhaps the best) of my writing is verbal painting'. Glendenning's refers to Bowen's 'Autobiographical Note' (p. 242) for the quotation. Although the source is not clear in Glendenning's text, the quotation comes from an unpublished manuscript in the Harry Ransom Centre at the University of Austin, Texas (Bowen archive, box 1.5) dated 11/10/1948 (p.2). I am grateful to Professor Andrew Bennett for providing me with this clarification. In 'The Experience of Writing', collected in Phyllis Lassner's study of Bowen's short fiction, Bowen's notes for a 1950 lecture at Wellesley College insist upon the viscosity of the short story: 'I began writing fiction at 19, still under the influence of...the wish to paint...The short story was good for me in two ways. 1) visual 2) the poetic stress on the moment. The impression for its own sake – spotlight, isolated – only slight need for rationalization and explanation. All my short stories have departed from a visual impression...' (Bowen, 'The Experience of Writing' in Lassner, 1991, p. 122).

⁶ Elizabeth Bowen, 'Stories by Katherine Mansfield' in *Afterthought* (New York: Longmans, 1962), pp. 53-74, p. 58.

⁷ Bowen used the same preface for *The Demon Lover and Other Stories* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1945) and *The Ivy Gripp'd the Steps* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945). Quoted from the preface to *The Demon Lover and Other Stories* in *MT*, p. 99.

⁸ *MT*, p. 121.

than feeling'.⁹ This primacy of vision over feeling is echoed by Phyllis Lassner's emphasis on Bowen as 'both a student and an artist of the short story'¹⁰, but for Lassner, this matter of vision was vital for the short story because it is both what provides its intensity, and the means by which detachment and impersonality (and the subsequent possibility for scholars to 'rescue her from the world of personal feeling'¹¹) might be effected. Although the 'settings' of Bowen's stories are 'intense passions'¹², Lassner also argues that '[i]ntensely imagistic and impressionistic, the short story for Bowen must dramatically and poetically evoke the writer's sensation while maintaining a dispassionate narrative stance, thus preventing the story from sliding into mere sensationalism or inflated emotion'.¹³ This, for Lassner, is what attracted Bowen to Maupassant's work; it initiated her 'admiration for the "dispassionate understatement of Maupassant"'.¹⁴ Bowen's stories, then, are intense in their feeling, yet also wholly dispassionate – what mediates is their viscosity. This suggests rather more of an overlap between 'vision' and 'feeling' than Lee's distinction allows for, and Bowen's own reading of Maupassant offers a rather striking discernment.

What Lassner terms 'admiration' for Maupassant appears rather absent from Bowen's letter: 'Ever since June I felt I couldn't bear to read French, then I thought I would begin again with someone I liked least, so I bought some collections of

⁹ Bowen, quoted in Glendenning, p. 1.

¹⁰ Lassner, 1991, p. 119.

¹¹ Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen: An Estimation* (London: Vintage, 1981), 2.

¹² Lassner, p. 119. Lassner argues that it is the 'setting' and the 'dispassion' of Bowen's work, enabled by the stories' viscosity, that distinguishes the short fiction both in terms of Bowen's ideas about writing and the actual stories she wrote: '...from her reviews of other writers' stories and prefaces to their story collections we can discern the qualities she admired and trace her aesthetic discrimination to her own work. Because Bowen came to see the short story as an art form distinctly separate from the novel, she did not model her stories along the structural lines set by ...James or Hardy... Those elements of their art she found useful serve her ambiguous language, which both reveals and leaves open to speculation the nature of the intense passions setting the atmosphere of her stories' (p. 119).

¹³ Lassner, p. 119.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Maupassant I hadn't got already, and brought them here'.¹⁵ Bowen concedes that Maupassant 'had sharp senses' but accuses him of 'rather a boring mind... You soon get to know the formula'.¹⁶ What *is* 'extraordinary' about his stories is the fascination they exert, 'like watching someone doing the same card trick over and over again'.¹⁷ Bowen is so compelled to 'watch' that she 'wondered if I were getting rather brutalised myself': and it is on this speculative, brutalising fascination that Bowen turns to the illustrations.¹⁸ What I am curious about is how in Bowen's letter it seems that Maupassant is not fascinating for the dispassion of his writing: instead, it is precisely the affect of his story illustrations that impress. The short story for Bowen is not a matter of vision *rather than* feeling, but instead gains its very force, its brutalising affect, from its *visuality*.

Bowen's insistence on this is not unconventional. In his 2006 essay on the phenomenology of the short story, Timothy Clark observes that this association invokes the form's relationship to realism, a matter 'where clarity, not novelty, is the issue... the narrator is all-seeing'.¹⁹ But more importantly, Clark's discussion recalls the double work being done by 'vision': '[v]isual metaphors... abound in short story theory'.²⁰ This is, in part, to do with what he describes as the privileging of vision as 'the sense

¹⁵ Letter dated January 5th, 1940, p. 4.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid. Bowen also, just after remarking on the illustrations, effects an almost filmic cut to asking Woolf if she 'has snow' in Rodmell that again puts the visual in proximity with feeling: 'I have a card you sent me with Rodmell church with snow on it. This makes me feel very homesick. I feel a sort of despair about my own generation – the people the same age as the century, I mean – we don't really suffer much but we get all sealed up.'

¹⁹ Timothy Clark, 'Not Seeing the Short Story: A Blind Phenomenology of Reading' in *The Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 26 (Durham, 2006), pp. 5-30.

²⁰ Clark quotes Dominic Head, who observes that this not only 'underlies the 'spatial' aspect of the genre' but also 'obscures the illusory nature' of the insight or comprehension and comprehensiveness the form appears to offer (Dominic Head, *The Modernist Short Story: A Study in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.10).

that is most comprehensively and most immediately knowing'.²¹ For Clark, the insistence on the visual in short story theory registers the 'metaphorics of sight as the relation between a detached, commanding subject and an object whose visual availability is also its domination...the force of visual metaphors lies in relation to the idea of a total understanding'.²² Lee's insistence on 'vision' rather than feeling, for reading Bowen's short fiction, then, intimates that this very visuality offers a vision: rather than 'personal' feeling, her work invokes insight and clarity. Clark observes that short story criticism and theory revolves around the idea of the epiphany, sudden comprehension, and cognition – the sense that the short story puts us in touch with more than the real: it offers what has, until reading, been concealed even from us. Pointing to our blind spots, it clarifies what we refuse to see. As Clark points out, it is an investment in this model that characterises the directions short story theory and criticism – despite its relative dearth in recent inquiry – has taken.

For Clark, the relative lack of interest in short story theory at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century might be understood as a response to how formalist models have dominated discussions of the short story. As Clark observes, critics aiming to dissolve formalist or structural readings have emphasised thematic anthologisation to attend to the ways short stories are often deployed to make visible marginalised nationalities, gender, race or sexual orientations.²³ But the turn away from

²¹ Clark, p. 9.

²² Ibid., p. 10.

²³ Although outside of the scope of the discussion to hand, Mary Louise Pratt develops this point in her 1981 Essay 'The Short Story: The Long and the Short of it', first printed in *Poetics* Vol. 10 (1981) and later collected in Charles E. May's *The New Short Story Theories* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994, pp. 91-113). Observing the marginal position of the short story in the history of literary theory and criticism, Pratt remarks that this has also allowed its writers to deploy the short story in politically disruptive and subversive ways: '...the short story is often the genre used to introduce new (and possibly stigmatized) subject matters into the literary arena' (p. 104). Pratt cites Maupassant's use of the form to address taboo subjects such as sexuality and class, and argues that the form has been deployed by Irish writers such as Joyce, O'Flaherty, O'Faolain, O'Connor, Moore, and Lavin for the 'establishment of a modern national literature' (p. 104-105). Pratt draws attention to its role in the development of a modern

form in favour of theme simultaneously risks undermining the relationship between the short story and marginality, occluding the formal uncertainties that afford the potential to make the marginal hidden and seen:

The brevity of the short story makes it peculiarly liable to this kind of cultural appropriation. Such themed collections necessarily set up a critical frame of reference that may direct in advance how the stories are to be read. This can open familiar stories to new possibilities. However, the device is also a clumsy one... This strategy threatens to suffocate one of the classic features of the short story, its making a rare space for the quirky, the 'submerged', the dislocated, the overlooked or merely the eccentric.²⁴

At the same time, Clark's discussion suggests that the other turn in short story inquiry towards the cognitive, characterised by Susan Lohafer's work, is equally problematic.²⁵ Observing Lohafer's claim in a 1997 interview that questions about form or genre 'will be *passé* – at least for the next hundred years'²⁶, Clark helps to highlight how this divorcing of 'form' from 'cognition' not only contradicts the investment of her cognitive model in formalist associations of the form with vision and insight, but also does not account for her own concern, in the same interview, about the risks that

literature of the American South, and argues that it has emerged in those places 'at an early stage of decolonization' such as small-town life in Canada, and Latin America's Argentinean 'jungle frontier' and Peru's 'modern indigenous life' (p. 106). The very marginal status of the short story thus allows for the portrayal of that which is marginal – the 'disorder of frontier society, or of traditional societies disintegrating in the face of modernization' (p. 105). Pratt also observes that the association of the short story with insight in the form of intuition is one of the ways it is distinguished from the novel: '...in the age of empiricism, the short story seems to have been the special domain for... topics marginalized and stigmatized by a novel consolidating itself around realism' (p. 107).

²⁴ Clark, p. 6. Clark observes that critical attention to the short story as a form or genre 'withered' in the 1990s, and that this is intrinsically linked to the assumption that attention to the kinds of questions short story theory and criticism has asked about what makes a short story a short story – the very kinds of questions that preoccupied Bowen – rendered short story theory 'almost a non-starter within a critical culture that tended to associate any suggestion of 'formalism' with moral or political evasion' (p. 5). For Clark, the turn towards cognition (e.g. Lohafer's work) or thematics, suggests its own kinds of cultural appropriation. The development of 'the American Short Story' in particular highlights for Clark these institutionalizations of the form, demanding 'the divorcing of this genre from an institutional Americanism that is perhaps more deeply ingrained in this field than in any part of literary culture' (p. 7).

²⁵ Clark identifies Lohafer's *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads* as one of the last significant books on short story theory. See Lohafer, Susan and Clarey, Jo Ellyn (Eds.), *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

²⁶ Lohafer quoted in Clark, fn 3 (24) from 'An Interview with Susan Lohafer', in *Speaking of the Short Story: Interviews with Contemporary Writers*, ed. Farhat Ifterharuddin, Mary Rohrberger, and Maurice Lee (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1997), pp. 167-80, 168.

thematization poses to ‘issues of poetics’.²⁷ It is worth noting here that Lohfer’s use of ‘poetics’ to identify what formalist definitions of the form offer invokes a distinction between knowledge and emotion, or feeling and vision and I want to suggest that these thematic and cognitive approaches are predicated, in part, on a fundamental assumption that feeling is a structural or formal aspect of storyness. Although vital to how a story works, it does not demand theorisation. This, in turn, makes the question of feeling and form less interesting for criticism and yet this distinction is what has enabled thematic and cognitive approaches to the short story, which concentrate on what the emotional work of a short story makes possible – insight and vision. Clark’s emphasis on the relationship between the quirky or dislocating and what a short story can make visible attends to the importance of the short story’s affective force, and although his discussion does not elucidate the emotional, I would argue that it is folded into the arguments he makes as both the hidden stuff of singular insight and the critical other around which thematic and cognitive criticism consolidates itself. As Clark’s discussion highlights, thematic and cognitive studies of the short story are linked by their uneasy marriage of a simultaneous lack of interest in apparently formal questions and their indebtedness to these very distinctions about the form’s vision and insight. While thematic or cognitive approaches to the short story may illuminate how the short story sees (or makes seen) what is hidden, these do so through a critical disinterest in, or selective blindness to, discerning the form and unpicking the ways these formalist aspects have been formulated in relation to emotion and feeling. The relationship between what the short story discerns, and how we discern the short story, then, is both

²⁷ Clark, p. 5.

a blind-spot that limits what thematic and cognitive approaches might offer and the very cornerstone of these approaches.²⁸

What is vital here, however, is what Clark describes as the ‘trick’ of the short story. Although the critical turn to thematics or cognitive studies has aimed to account for what the short story makes known and allows us to see, there is little recognition in this scholarship about the very fictionality of insight. Clark observes that the trick of the short story is precisely that – to make something *be seen*, rather than to see it. This reminder helps us to understand that insight, in the short story, takes the form of a feeling of, feeling for, or feeling like, insight. For Clark, it is precisely this trick that makes what he calls those more basic and simple questions about the short story continue to be relevant, and it is Clark’s return to this formalistic association between the short story and the vision it invites that enables him to observe that the visual bias in short story theory is so ingrained (so invisible, perhaps), that it begins to appear to be a form of denial.²⁹ Clark suggests that to account for this phenomenological slippage

²⁸ While a full engagement with Lohafer’s theories are outside the scope of this work, they do point towards potential future work which might develop the ways cognitive theories of the short story correspond to cognitive theories of emotion, and which Bowen’s short stories and criticism might challenge. In her essay ‘A Cognitive Approach to Storyness’ (originally published in *Short Story* (Spring, 1990), and re-printed in Charles May’s *The New Short Story Theories* (pp. 301-311), Lohafer cites Bowen’s insistence that the short story requires a ‘vital fortuity’ to exemplify what Lohafer calls a ‘tradition of ineffability’ that gets in the way of being able to theorise the short story (p. 301). Lohafer argues that cognitive theory offers ‘an experimental approach to essentialist, honorific concepts inherited from Poe: “unity,” “totality,” and “single effect.”’ Instead of asking how stories are composed, or even how stories “mean,” we can ask how storyness is recognized, by what cognitive strategies it is processed’ (p. 303). Lohafer argues the short story can be broken into ‘units’, or smaller stories (an ‘anterior’, ‘penultimate’ and ‘final’ story). This sequence ‘stages’ or advances closure by inviting cognitive processes through which the reader negotiates and interprets the events of the story, until, when they reach the ‘last’ in the sequence, they are prepared to recognise this as ‘closure’, in whatever form that story has constructed it (p. 304-308). Lohafer argues that by turning to ‘closure’, short story scholarship can ‘turn short story criticism into short story theory’ (p. 309). This in turn provides a ‘critical tool’ which ‘turns even the most naive student into a valued analyst’ by turning ‘intuitions into data’ – these ‘data yield insight’ (p. 309-310). These conclusions however are complicated by Lohafer’s remarks that only when ‘I shifted my attention from the modifier “short” to the noun “story” ... was [I] able to ask a different question: what is it that accounts for the perception of storyness in short stories?’ (p. 302). Dropping the ‘short’ from ‘story’ points to the ways the short story escapes definition: rather than develop a theory of the short story, Lohafer has developed a theory of storyness.

²⁹ Clark, p. 7. Clark remarks: ‘The visual bias in short story theory is so strong that it raises the question of how much it may be a form of denial’ (p. 11).

perhaps what we need is a model of ‘not seeing’, a *blind* short story. What I want to suggest, however, is that the relationship between insight and feeling invites a slightly different take, one that draws out the movement of the short story, how it turns between and revolves around vision and blindness, insight and feeling. I believe Clark’s discussion helps us to understand that every moment of insight associated with the short story is, phenomenologically, a moment of blindness. As Clark has shown, what the short story and reader sees relies on a blindness both to what is not seen *and* to the verisimilitude of insight. But I propose the short story reader is further blinded by the *sense* of insight: if insight is turned up, then feeling is no longer either what guarantees insight, nor the authentic remainder once the trick of insight is unveiled. Instead feeling is at work in the movement between blindness and insight. It is the very stuff of verisimilitude, a motion that is vital to what the short story may – or may not – discern. By attending to the way the short story moves between and feels for or like both insight and blindness, I hope we might more closely approach a sense of the short story as moving pictures. Rather than Clark’s model of ‘seeing’ or ‘not seeing’, of ‘vision’ or ‘blindness’, I suggest we need a theory of the short story that attends to emotion pictures, a space where vision and feeling overlap and form a discerning point on which blindness and insight turn.

While Hermione Lee describes Bowen’s short fiction as a matter of ‘vision’ rather than feeling, this distinction, although part of a tradition of short story theory, is not so easily made, and I want to draw attention to the movement Bowen suggested at work in the relationship between vision and feeling. Although Bowen recognised the short story by ‘a striking visual clarity...[how] sense and feeling seldom bog down in

words’³⁰, the visual, a story’s ‘pictures’, are not enough to make a short story a short story. For Bowen, the short story is discerned by how those pictures *move*. This is her chief criticism of some of her earliest work. Lacking clarity about ‘the difference between a story and a sketch’, a short story, Bowen insists, ‘to be a story, *must* have a turning point’.³¹ Its sense of completion and wholeness comes not from its ending, nor from its content, but from its movement, from its moving pictures. That a short story *turns*, I would argue, returns Clark’s observations about the viscosity of the short story to thinking about emotion. Carrying the sense of a pivot point, a change or revelation, as well as a paring back or peeling, Bowen’s ‘turning point’ names the very moment of insight or clarity – vision – that Clark suggests is short story theory’s blind spot.

But ‘turn’ also calls attention to the trickiness of this turning point, which only appears to turn up or reveal. The short story’s movement, its very ability to turn, suggests underhandedness, how in turning it misleads, beguiles, or cheats.³² Bowen’s writing about the short story corresponds with the arguments Clark sketches out, but it is the ‘turning’ point of her story ‘Tears, Idle Tears’ that, through its spectacular interest in the ocular, exemplifies how the trick of ‘insight’ already turns into a problem of reading emotion. Here we can extend my earlier remark that this story does a turn by attending to how, when Frederick cries, he is seen, and sees himself being seen, by the bespectacled girl. In my previous discussion of ‘Tears, Idle Tears’, I argued that the question of how one ‘sees’ tears is at work from the beginning of the story, with the earlier parts preoccupied by Frederick’s tears as seen by his mother, and himself, who sees from the outside, from within, and even from behind. But this language of looking

³⁰ ‘Encounters’ in *MT*, p. 121.

³¹ *Ibid*, pp. 120-121.

³² See the Oxford English Dictionary Online, entry for ‘turn’ (verb). To do a ‘turn’, as used below, is derived in English from the verb turn, in sense 21: ‘a subtle device of any kind; a trick, wile, artifice, stratagem’.

at tears accelerates and by the time the bespectacled girl sees Frederick we are so awash in a semantics of vision and insight that the language is, like Frederick's eyes, bunged-up with seeing. Frederick's encounter with the girl is all about looking at tears, and it is clear that gaze and reading are overlain with insight and analysis. Forming the turning point in Frederick's cognition about his tears, his parlay with the girl is constituted through a relay of looking and vision that has the reader seeing the girl seeing Frederick, and seeing Frederick seeing himself being seen. The narration offers so many lenses through which to look that the reader is both bespectacled – offered insight – and blinded in the very attempt to see tears. Rather than an interpretation of Frederick's tears, the blurring of seeing and reading in this last section of the story constitutes the problem of reading emotion that his tears makes visible, and this is iterated by the girl's oblique advice to Frederick that he should '...snap out of that, if you can...It does you no good. It's all the way you see things' (486).

Insight's trickiness is glaring here, but what is particularly striking about this formulation of insight, vision and feeling is how the reader *sees* the girl looking at Frederick. After he approaches her bench, the girl offers Frederick an apple and, whilst he eats, she questions him about his tears, and observes him while we observe her observing him. What we see is the way *he*, or we, *see* her looking at him. We see her insight:

The girl re-crossed her legs and tucked her thin crepe-de-chine skirt round the other knee. 'What had you done – cheeked her?' Frederick swept the mouthful of apple into one cheek. 'No,' he said shortly. 'Cried.'
 'I should say you did. Bellowed, I watched you all down the path.'
 There was something ruminative in the girl's tone that made her remark really not at all offensive; in fact, she looked at Frederick as though she were meeting an artist who had just done a turn. He had been standing about, licking and biting the apple, but now he came

and sat down at the other end of the bench. ‘How do you do it?’ she said.

Frederick only turned away: his ears began burning again.
(485)

Here the girl’s reading revolves around the sense that Frederick, in crying, has ‘done a turn’, drawing together vision, feeling and motion. If Frederick appears to ‘do a turn’, the very watching of this trick turns his watcher’s mind, and in reading, our own: to ruminate is to ‘revolve, turn over and over in the mind’.³³ Frederick’s turn – the apparent fictitiousness, and all too realness – of his tears, affects his watcher, making her mind move as well. Like Bowen, brutalised by the very fascination of watching Maupassant’s stories ‘doing a trick’ over and over, the bespectacled girl is moved, in turn, toward cognition by watching Frederick, and discerning the possibility that his tears are both visible, and fictitious. Frederick feels this discernment and is moved by it: before her rumination ‘he had been standing about’ but it is her turning him over that draws him closer: ‘but now he came and sat down at the other end of the bench’ (485). Yet, despite the intimacy his being read initiates, by asking ‘how he does it’, the girl makes this trick or verisimilitude visible, intimating that his tears are, or may be, something he ‘does’ rather than experiences – and this insight causes him to turn away. What is vital here is the interplay between seeing, moving, and feeling. At no point does ‘Tears, Idle Tears’ *see* anything: what it registers is a discerning of the movements that make up seeing and reading, and the ways these movements turn in, with, toward and away. The short story’s effect does not come from its pictures or what we see, but from how those pictures *move*, and the simultaneity of the revelation and concealment on which they revolve. The short story’s turn is its moving pictures: its excessive appeal to insight and its dependence on blindness are intrinsic to its affect. This is how it feels for

³³ See the Oxford English Dictionary Online, entry for ‘ruminate’ (verb).

the other. For Bowen, vision and feeling correspond: picking out the best of her stories, she observes that the most powerful are ‘given frame by emotion’.³⁴ This is what I want to suggest we might do with Bowen’s remark on Maupassant’s illustrations: use these, as a sort of window, in her short fiction – not as a way of gaining access or entry into it, but instead to discern how Bowen’s short fiction frames motion, pictures and fictional feeling.

Moving, feeling, framing, emotion, pictures: writing about Bowen’s vision of the short story summons a language of the cinematic. Bowen’s interest in the cinema and her own cinema-going is well documented. In the 1930s, shortly after taking on the house at Clarence Terrace, she and her husband took as a lodger Billy Buchanan, Alfred Hitchcock’s nephew who had come to learn filmmaking from him.³⁵ In the contributor’s notes to *Footnotes to the Film*, editor Charles Davy’s entry on Bowen observes her husband’s role as Governor of the British Film Institute; Bowen herself is described as a member of the London Film Society who has ‘done only one piece of film criticism and has no technical knowledge of the cinema’.³⁶ Though her association with film according to Davy is minimal, her inclusion suggests she offers a persuasive and well-

³⁴ Elizabeth Bowen, ‘Encounters’ in *Afterthought* (London: Longmans, 1962), p.88.

³⁵ See Bowen’s letter to Virginia Woolf, July 31st, 1935, from Waldencote, Oxford (Monks House Papers, Virginia Woolf Archives, University of Sussex Library Special Collections). Bowen discusses house-hunting and then describes Clarence Terrace, where she will be taking as bedsitter the young Billy Buchanan, ‘who is to learn film-making from Alfred Hitchcock’.

³⁶ Charles Davy (Ed.) and Martin S. Dworkin (Advisory Ed.), *Footnotes to the Film: The Literature of Cinema* (New York: Arno Press, 1970), p. 323. Citations refer to the 1970 reprint, however *Footnotes* was first published in 1938 (see Charles Davy (Ed.), *Footnotes to the Film* (London: Lovat Dickson Ltd, Readers’ Union Ltd, 1938). Bowen’s essay ‘Why I go to the cinema’, which I will go on to discuss later in this chapter, was one of the several critical, theoretical and personal reflections on film gathered in Davy’s 1938 collection (see Davy, pp. 205-220). Davy’s Preface highlights the very anxieties about film and cinema considered here: ‘...is it possible for anyone who looks with intelligent curiosity at contemporary events to ignore the influence of films on human affairs?...The millions of people who fill these cinema theatres receive constantly a stream of emotional suggestions from the screen; their ideals, opinions, tastes are all more or less affected by the films they see...Not to know something of how and why and where films are made and circulated, something of the men and women who make them and of the audiences who pay to see them, is to remain blind to one of the major forces which for good or evil is shaping the civilisation of to-day and to-morrow. It is by offering a critical survey of a subject of such far-reaching human importance that this book hopes to justify itself’ (p. v-vi).

positioned personal and critical, rather than technical or theoretical, response to film, a valued point of view. And in her correspondence with VS Pritchett, Bowen records his insistence that there is much for the writer to ‘learn’ from the cinema. Bowen scholarship has observed the ways the cinema, and cinematic are figured in her work, whether as a setting or subject, or through technical qualities such as gaze, lighting, focus and cutting, as well as discussions about the cinematographic existence of *Eva Trout*.³⁷ But for Bowen, the cinema shares a special affinity with the short story: of ‘the same generation,’ she writes in the *Faber Book of Modern Stories*, these have been ‘accelerating together’.³⁸ Invoking both a language of speed and correspondence, the cinema and the short story share this sense of revolution, turning, in motion – of being moving pictures.

Bowen’s remark about the technology of the short story and the movies extends to the short story what Laura Marcus, in her work on writing about the cinema in the Modernist period describes as the ‘locomotive’ effect of the cinema.³⁹ Building on Lynne Kirby’s work, Marcus argues the train should be seen as a ‘mechanical double for the cinema’ by offering a ‘protocinematic...perceptual paradigm, which helped to

³⁷ In addition to Bennett and Royle’s discussion, which informs my thinking in this chapter, Maud Ellmann includes the cinema amongst those modern innovations Bowen loved (Ellmann, p. 5) and we might include the ‘locomotive’ that I go on to discuss here under those transports that Ellmann observes move Bowen’s writing. More recently, Lara Feigel links the intimacy of the cinema to the disintegration of social boundaries and develops in Bowen’s work the ‘cinematic and photographic existence’ of the Blitz that intensifies ‘the 1930s sense of camera consciousness as helplessly passive’ (*Literature, Cinema, Politics, 1930-1945: Reading Between the Frames* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 15. Bowen’s ‘Dead Mabelle’, however, which I go on to discuss in this chapter, offers a challenge to Feigel’s argument that Bowen’s writing in the 1930’s was only ‘loosely cinematic or political’ (p. 6) by suggesting Bowen’s engagement with the cinematic extends beyond those qualities listed above but instead involves the very theorisation of the subject.

³⁸ Elizabeth Bowen, ‘Preface’ to *The Faber Book of Modern Stories* collected in Charles May (256-262), p.256. Bowen’s arguments about the short story in this preface are the ones against which Susan Lohafer offers her cognitive model. Bowen is explicit in this essay that the short story is defined by its emotion: ‘The story should have the valid central emotion and inner spontaneity of the lyric...should be as composed, in the plastic sense, and as visual as a picture...However plain or lively or unpretentious be the manner of the story, the central emotion – emotion however remotely involved or hinted at – should be austere, major’ (p. 260).

³⁹ Laura Marcus, *The Tenth Muse: Writing about Cinema in the Modernist Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2007), p. 68.

train the cinema spectator in a new, specifically modern mode of perception'.⁴⁰ What the train – and the cinema – do is conduct a kind of 'conceptual and perceptual rupture'.⁴¹ For the early film viewer, the starting or flinching evoked by films representing movement required a sense adjustment, much like for the early train passenger startled by being in motion: both the passenger, and the film viewer, with 'untrained cognitive habits' needed to learn what kind of 'mode of operation' these technologies required.⁴² Marcus notes that this spectator relationship is echoed in Christian Metz's identification of the train and cinema as technologies that were perceived to actuate the primitive, making 'the panicking spectator ...the credulous 'child' in cinema's own 'infancy''.⁴³ Here Marcus highlights how writing about 'motion pictures' is, in the modernist period, inextricably linked to discussions of emotion. Noting that critical responses to film were 'frequently framed in visceral terms, as if film were an assault on the senses and the body',⁴⁴ Marcus points out that writing about the cinema by the 1920s distinguished between 'mechanical locomotion, and movement as a question of empathy and aesthetics'⁴⁵ – the cinema 'moves', but does not create 'emotion'. What is at stake, then, in writing about film in this period, are questions

⁴⁰ Lynne Kirby, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), p. 9.

⁴¹ Marcus, p. 68. Marcus draws on Wolfgang Schivelbusch's argument (in *The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. by Anselm Hollo (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980) that railway travel 'effected the most profound of revolutions in the nineteenth century, confronting the bourgeois traveller with the industrial process' by 'annihilating space and time, in ways that subsequently became identified with the new medium of the film' (Marcus, p. 68).

⁴² Marcus, p. 69-70. Marcus notes that Stephen Bottomore, a historian of the early cinema, describes this doubling of locomotive and cinema shock through a discussion of the Lumiere brother's 1895 film *Arrival of a Train at the Station*, in which an approaching train advances on the film audience: 'The significance of the train in this history is not that it has trained the spectator perceptually, but that its 'arrival' on the screen animates those fears attached to the locomotive, and to railway travel with its attendant dangers' (p. 69). See Bottomore's 'The Panicking Audience? Early Cinema and the "Train Effect"' in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 19: 2 (1999), pp. 177-216.

⁴³ Metz cited in Marcus (p. 69). See Christian Metz's *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).

⁴⁴ Marcus, p. 68.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

about what kind of movement the cinema produces: this is irreducibly tied to anxieties about emotion.⁴⁶ It is not only thinking about modernist writing about film that is at stake in this: as Marcus observes, postmodernism ‘absorbs this distinction between mechanical and authentic emotion’ and, through it, ‘produces the human as subject’.⁴⁷ If, as Marcus argues, cinema and modernist writing about the cinema locate an epistemological and ontological shock, an attempt to find a language to describe this medium’s ‘unprecedented power of movement’⁴⁸, then, it also registers a sense of anxiety about how to contend with that movement. Marcus argues that central to the development of a film aesthetic was a disaggregation of movement as ‘mere mechanical motion’ from ‘movement connected to sensation and emotion’ – this differentiation resonated throughout writing about film, and its relationship to the arts, in the 1920s.⁴⁹

We can see this distinction, and anxieties about the cinema, in Virginia Woolf’s 1918 remarks about film in ‘The Movie Novel’, a review of a Compton MacKenzie novel.⁵⁰ In the essay Woolf observes the excess of pictures, and how they reel together into a cinematic, rather than literary experience. Unlike the ‘slow moving’ characters of earlier fiction, who leave an impression after the novel is finished, and about whom ‘we can know many things’, MacKenzie’s characters are unknowable because the pictures of the writing, ‘as in a cinema, follow another without stopping, for if it stopped and we had to look at it we should be bored’.⁵¹ Like the cinema character, about whom we ‘never care whether he is wet or hurt or dead’, this writing is not a novel, but ‘a book of

⁴⁶ Marcus observes ‘the widespread anxiety over the extent to which the speed and transience of film and, indeed, its ‘mechanical’ nature, could coexist with emotional and aesthetic affect’ (p. 5).

⁴⁷ Marcus, p. 40.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 79.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Virginia Woolf, ‘The Movie Novel’ *Essays*, vol. 2 (1918), pp 290-1; quoted in Marcus, p. 102-103. Woolf’s essay is a review of Compton MacKenzie’s *The Early Life and Adventures of Sylvia Scarlett* which was later made into a film in 1935.

⁵¹ Woolf quoted in Marcus, p. 102-103.

cinema'.⁵² Laura Marcus observes that Woolf had a significant interest in aspects of the visual in cinematography and photography, but particularly with regards to the representation of emotion.⁵³ While these altered substantially in the 1920s, most markedly in Woolf's 1926 essay 'The Cinema', to which I will return, what I am interested in at this point for thinking about Bowen is how for Woolf, in this early writing, the problem with cinema is that of ineffectual writing. Distinctly unable to do what writing could (and should), Marcus observes that cinema for Woolf offered only 'motion without emotion', a 'surface vision' that was 'incapable of suggesting interiority'.⁵⁴ For Woolf, while literature's 'slow moving characters'⁵⁵ left an after image in the readers' mind, film engaged only the retina: it is watched and discarded, seen but not returned to. Film characters had 'only the life of their immediate projection'⁵⁶ and moved the physical eye, not the cognitive 'I'. Here film becomes doubly an anxiety not only about authenticity, but also life and livingness itself:

The distinction between...the 'eye' and the 'mind' or 'brain' [is] a contrast at the heart of writing about cinema in this period and expressive of the concern, indicated briefly in Woolf's review, that the new medium of the film was able to engage the eye but not the mind, so that its impact was purely retinal. Hence Woolf's suggestion that literary characters such as those of Fielding and Defoe ('slow-moving' as opposed, presumably, to the mechanically agitated figures on the cinematic screen) had an afterlife in the reader's mind (which could indeed be understood as a form of after-image). Moving images, by contrast, were perceived to have only the instantaneous life of their immediate projection and brief retinal reception, each image being replaced by the one that succeeds it.⁵⁷

⁵² Woolf quoted in Marcus, p. 102-103.

⁵³ Marcus, p. 14.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 103.

⁵⁵ Woolf quoted in Marcus, p. 102.

⁵⁶ Marcus, p. 103.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

The cinema is risky not only because it provokes feeling without producing authentic emotion, but because what it does provoke, its ‘immediate perception’, does not provide any insight – motion pictures offer no vision. They are instead an excess of pictures without real emotion.

Woolf’s 1918 essay registers the way anxieties about motion pictures in the 1920s are also anxieties about emotion and insight; and these are anxieties about what literature might, can or should do. Given Bowen’s twinning of the short story and cinema technologies, we do not have to go far to draw a correspondence between these anxieties about cinema-e-motion and anxieties about the marginal position of the short story. Discussions of the short story turn, especially in the first part of the twentieth century, on distinctions between mass production, sentimentality and aesthetics⁵⁸ and, as Suzanne Clark observes (as discussed in Chapter One), modernist ‘anxieties over sentimental writing’ intersect discourses about authorship with gender.⁵⁹ Certainly, as Leslie Hankins argues, motion pictures are at the heart of modernist aesthetics, and Woolf was acutely aware of the risks this posed to her as a woman writer: ‘[e]motion was a loaded term within Virginia Woolf’s cultural moment, as it remains in

⁵⁸ Mary Louise Pratt links the commercial history of the short story to anxieties about its effects on the psyche. Arguing that the form’s very appeal to public taste and consumption, as well as its function as a commodity both for readers and for the writer, has aligned it against ‘high’ art: ‘In the realm of the commercial (as distinct from the literary) magazine, the short story becomes anathema to the art-for-art’s-sake values that consolidated themselves in the modernist period. In fact, it became exactly what those values are erected against. It is art commodified and commercialized, art one tries to make a living at and (horrors!) possibly even succeeds’[sic]. Bowen’s stories exemplify this, published as they were across a range of literary and commercial publications. See Marcia Farrell’s online bibliography of Bowen’s writing for a full inventory of these. The intersection between the cinema and the short story that I am proposing here is one at work in Edward J. O’Brien’s 1929 *Dance of the Machines*, in which he criticizes the short story for its mechanization of the psyche. See the recent special short story edition of *Critical Quarterly* Vol. 52, Issue 2 (July 2010) for Kasia Boddy’s discussion of O’Brien and the short story (‘Edward J. O’Brien’s Prize Stories of the ‘National Soul’, pp. 14-28). In the same issue David Trotter considers Bowen’s method of ‘dis-enablement’ in her story ‘The Secession’ in his essay ‘Dis-enablement: subject and method in the modernist short story’, pp. 4-13.

⁵⁹ Discussed in Chapter One. See Suzanne Clark’s essay (‘Sentimental Modernism’ in Bonnie Kime Scott (Ed.), *Gender in Modernism: New Geographies Complex Intersections* (University of Illinois Press: Chicago, 2007), pp.125-136) for a discussion of texts that not only address these anxieties, but also accentuate their own productions of sentimentality as a response to it.

ours... Woolf's struggle with the censors of sentiment was not an isolated personal one, however, but one shared by a generation of modernist women writers'.⁶⁰ Woolf's developing aesthetic, and its emphasis on film's degradation of authentic subjective emotion, is even more palpable in her 1926 review of Stern's 'The Deputy was King':

The grudging voice will concede that it is all very brilliant; will admit that a hundred pages have flashed by like a hedge seen from an express train; but will reiterate that for all that something is wrong.... There is a proof that there are no values. There is no shape to these apparitions. Scene melts into scene; person into person... There is no grasping them... We have sat receptive and watched, with our eyes rather than our minds, as we do at the cinema, what passes on the screen in front of us... For all their brilliancy the scenes are clouded; the crises are blurred.⁶¹

Here film effects a receptive melting, smudging and blurring of the mind and subject as it does the hedges flashing by: it is as if too much film will dull discernment, sight and insight. Laura Marcus emphasises that it is around the same time that Woolf's writing suggests a significant shift in thinking about cinema and cautions us not to read these few essays as either a damning of the cinema or a disinterest in what it can offer.⁶² Bloomsbury writers were remarkably silent about cinema up to the mid 1920s, despite their interest in the visual, but Marcus reads this absence of work not as a lack of something to say, but instead as an indication that these writers, and Woolf in particular, were effectively feeling out the problems and possibilities of cinema and its relationship to literary aesthetics, particularly in regards to "...vision" as a question of the eye or of

⁶⁰ Leslie Kathleen Hankins, 'A splice of reel life in Virginia Woolf's "Time Passes": Censorship, cinema and "the usual battlefield of emotions"' in *Criticism*, Vol. XXXV, No.1 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), pp. 91–114, p. 91, 95.

⁶¹ Virginia Woolf, 'Life and the Novelist' (1926) in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 4 (1925–1928), ed. by Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1987), pp. 402–403.

⁶² This change is registered in Woolf's essay 'The Cinema', published in June 1926. 'Life and the Novelist' was not published until November of that same year. 'The Cinema' is discussed later in this chapter. 'The Cinema' is available in *The Crowded Dance of Modern Life*, ed. by Rachel Bowlby (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. 54–58.

the mind and imagination...'.⁶³ It is the cinema's effect on Woolf's formulation of the relationship between seeing and perceiving, or vision and insight, that Marcus argues comes to inflect Woolf's work.

For Marcus, modernist writing about film forms a kind of 'talking in the cinema' that lends to Woolf's (and Bloomsbury's) 'relative silence' not an indifference, but a 'necessary pause – a reticence in the face of the unfamiliar'.⁶⁴ Picturing Woolf and Bloomsbury much like cinema scholars picture the early train and film spectators, these are an audience taken aback by the cinema, training their own cognitive senses. Modernist writers who damned the cinema might be symptomatic of a lack of adjustment, their writing registering the very kinds of perceptual shock the cinema (and train) represented. Unlike Woolf and other writers still trying to get a sense of how to make sense of cinema and its potential, however, Bowen's writing is remarkably *vocal* about the cinema, and I am suggesting that this is precisely because there is something to which it appeals in her own writing: if Woolf is silent about film, Bowen has much to say. This is partly what Bowen's letter, with which I opened, registers. The letter is one of several correspondences between Bowen and Woolf. If Woolf was, in the 1920s, reticent about the cinema, and cautious about how film could not express authentic emotion, Bowen's letter in the 1930s seems to open a window in time to go back to the cinematic in her own writing in this period, to consider how her writing speaks into this filmic pause.

⁶³ Marcus, p. 99. Marcus notes that there is 'relatively limited written evidence of the Bloomsbury Group's intellectual engagement with film in its first decades' and goes on to note only a handful of essays or pamphlets, the most substantial being Woolf's 'The Cinema'.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

For Woolf, what film needs is to learn a sense of intention, and authenticity, from writing: it ‘seems to have everything to say before it has anything to say’⁶⁵ and she envisions a time in the future when the cinema, which, unlike writing, does not leave an ‘after image’, may discover how to express ‘visual emotions’.⁶⁶ I will return to consider how Woolf’s thoughts on this changed in the late 1920s, but for the moment, I am interested in how Woolf’s remarks until the 1920s, for Marcus, indexes how cinema and modernist writing about the cinema locates that epistemological and ontological shock, the problem with how to contend with the disaggregation of motion and emotion. For Bowen, however, what writing might learn from film is that the disaggregation of motion and emotion, film’s apparent inability to produce authentic emotion, is not a shock because it is an absence of emotion, but instead because it forces a cognitive shift in the idea of emotion itself: what it makes *seen* is the investment in keeping invisible emotion’s non-subjectivity. For Bowen, cinema does not just *change* emotion, or fail to achieve emotion, but visualises its unreality. Its movement kills the authenticity of feeling: motion pictures are emotion pictures – they make emotion ‘reel’.

This has not gone unobserved. As discussed previously, in *Still Lives*, Bennett and Royle remark upon the erasure of interiority figured by Bowen’s visualisation of emotion when Sydney, a character in Bowen’s 1927 novel *The Hotel*, describes watching two people who ‘appear as in some perfect piece of cinema-acting, emotion represented without emotion’.⁶⁷ This ‘emotionless representation and a representation of emotion in the absence of itself’, Bennett and Royle write, ‘would suggest a radical

⁶⁵ Woolf, ‘The Cinema’, p. 58.

⁶⁶ Woolf, ‘The Cinema’, p. 57. The term ‘after image’ is from Laura Marcus’ reading of the temporality of Woolf’s aesthetic (see Marcus, p. 103). Marcus also suggests a kind of critical dialogue between Bowen and Woolf at work in Bowen’s essay ‘Why I go to the Cinema’. For Marcus, Bowen’s cinema-aesthetic is distinct from Woolf’s because she is writing after the advent of the ‘talkies’. This intensifies the critical importance of the timing of ‘Dead Mabelle’, as I go on to discuss.

⁶⁷ Elizabeth Bowen, *The Hotel* (London: Penguin, 1927), p. 42.

fictionalization of emotion as such: that emotion can be represented as without emotion figures the possibility of emotion only ever being an empty representation'.⁶⁸ 'The difficulty,' they note, however, is that 'under the regime of representation, representation without object or origin is no longer thinkable'.⁶⁹ But it is precisely this possibility – the representation of emotion without an emotional origin – that emotion *is* a representation without origin – that I want to suggest is at work in Bowen's short fiction and the correspondence she draws between cinema and the short story. It is this that she writes into the cinematic pause left by both the absence of writing on the cinema (for those who 'didn't talk in the cinema'), and that extended by aesthetic anxieties about the inauthenticity of cinema emotion. I want to turn now to Bowen's story 'Dead Mabelle', one of Bowen's lesser known, but perhaps one of her most obviously 'cinematic' stories.⁷⁰

Published in 1929, 'Dead Mabelle' overtly takes as its subject both cinema and what would come to be described as modernist anxieties about cinema emotion and aesthetics. The story opens in 1927, when Mabelle, a screen actress, is murdered shortly after completing her last film 'Purblind'. A few months before her death, however, William, an awkward banker who finds it difficult to know – or to be known by – others, apparently falls in love with her image. Taken to the cinema, almost against his will, by Jim, a fellow bank clerk, William appears entranced by and soon obsessed with Mabelle's image. After the first outing with Jim, William begins going to Mabelle's films in secret. He watches them in the order they are shown at all the cinemas he can get to, already watching her in the past. The first films he sees are from

⁶⁸ Bennett and Royle, p. 7.

⁶⁹ Bennett and Royle, p. 7.

⁷⁰ 'Dead Mabelle' (CS, pp. 276-285) was first published in *Joining Charles and Other Stories* (London: Constable & co., 1929). Subsequent citations are provided in text and refer to CS.

1924, and, as he watches her, his spectatorship accelerates in time to the box office trend for Mabelle films. He is reeled forward up to what we know is coming: that her most recent release is also her last. When he finds out about her death, William initially stays away from the cinema, but finds himself drawn back, looking for her. Watching her last motion picture, which finished filming right before her murder, William attempts to reconcile her fleetingness with her death, the intense livingness of her picture with her not being real:

He looked back, once, towards the town and the Picturedrome. One moment 'Mabelle' was blazing emerald over the white façade; the next the lights were out, 'Mabelle', the doors beneath, had disappeared. So she went....what of her? 'You're here,' he said, and put out a hand in the darkness. '*You know I know you're here, you proud thing! Standing and looking. Do you see me?...You're more here than I...*' (284)

Outside the Picturedrome, William experiences a kind of shock: startled by a pair of lovers 'plastered together speechlessly under the wall' he 'shuddered at the thought of such a contact' (284). This is when Mabelle reappears to him:

...he had lost her. Mabelle...*Mabelle?* Ah, here...

Here, by him, burning into him with her actuality all the time. Burdening him with her realness...ghostly chrysanthemums drained of their pinks and yellows raised up their heads....As he watched, one stem with its burden detached itself and swayed forward, dipped through the lamplight and vanished...How – why – while the other stems stood up erect and unmoving, sustaining their burden? *Who had - ?*

Oh no, not that! He began to be terrified. 'Don't press me too hard, I can't stand it...Mabelle, look here – don't!' He looked beyond the chrysanthemums, left and right, everywhere. She was there, left, right, everywhere, printed on darkness... (284)

The story cuts away from the image of Mabelle's ghostliness, a linguistic absence or nothing that is 'everywhere', and we re-open in William's sitting-room, staring at his

books and pictures as he examines how life, ‘that abstraction behind the business of living, was due to begin again’ (285). Alone with his livingness, William contemplates being and feeling and, in search of a ‘fit gesture that he could have offered her’ (285), he stages a pistol shot to his head. But the gesture, empty, turns into an examination of the objects – ‘the note-books, the bitten pencil-stump, match-ends, attempt at a sonnet, a tie, crumpled up and forgotten’ – that, instead of a gun, ‘littered the drawer’ (285).

‘Dead Mabelle’ stages an acute awareness of anxieties circulating in the 1920s about the consuming power of the cinema and its fleetingness as it chews up actresses and spends them for the ticket buyers. Mabelle’s movies are not enduring art, the story reminds us – they are ‘it’, ‘glamour’, ‘fashion’, a trend that even the real horror of Mabelle’s murder doesn’t quell but instead accelerates and amplifies, folded back into the cinema by the industry’s capitalising on and spending of a vogue for feeling:

The release of her last, *Purblind*, was awaited breathlessly. Her last, when brimming with delighted horror, horrified delight, with a sense of foreknowledge as though time were being unwound from the reel backwards, one would see all Mabelle’s unconsciousness under the descending claw of horror. Nothing she had ever mimicked could approach the end that had overtaken her. It was to be, this film, feast for the epicure in sensation; one would watch the lips smile, the gestures ripple out from brain to finger-tips. It was on her return from the studio at the end of the making of this very picture that she had perished so appallingly. (276)

Mabelle’s film sensation is explicitly linked to her commodification, reminding us that Mabelle’s glamour is only for the moment: ‘in another month or so, when her horror faded and her vogue had died, her films would be recalled – boiled down, they said. He had heard old films were used for patent leather; that which was Mabelle would be a shoe, a bag, a belt round some woman’s middle. These sloughed off, what of her?’ (284).

Mabelle is emptied out, spent, her subjectivity reduced to a filmic materiality that lives only as long as it generates interest and transactional value. Here 'Dead Mabelle' might open itself out to being read through the figure of the 'femme fatale', which Mary Ann Doane locates as 'a figure of discursive unease and potential epistemological trauma'.⁷¹ Certainly, Mabelle's fatality is initiated in the title, and, as with Doane's description of the femme fatale, Mabelle's 'power and fascination' also appears to be generated by how she 'comes to *overrepresent*', with her simultaneous excess of presence and lack of substance: 'Not subject to her conscious will', Doane argues, the femme fatale 'blurs the opposition between passivity and activity'.⁷² 'Dead Mabelle' registers how the filmic femme fatale is, as Doane describes, 'localised...as spectacle',⁷³ and here 'seeing' and being seen is crucial, with Mabelle's subjectivity subsumed into an eye without an 'I', an eye only for others. Mabelle's eyes are not eyes, but in pictures, isolated in parts: 'Her under lids were straight, she would lean back her head and look over them. Her upper lids arched to a point, she had three-cornered eyes' (278). Mabelle herself is disconnected from the spectacle of her own body: 'when her face went into repose the lids came down slowly, hiding her eyes for moments together' (278).

Mabelle is reduced here to filmic technology, her eyes a screen with lids that, like cinema curtains, open and close, rise or fall, revealing and concealing the eye from the audience, and herself. This movement of her lids, the alternation between Mabelle's blindness, and the audience's, offers a movement between the visible and hidden that leads William to speculate about Mabelle's 'I' on the other side of her cinema eyes:

⁷¹ Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.1.

⁷² Doane, p. 2.

⁷³ Ibid.

‘There was [another]thing about Mabelle: the way she made love. She was tired, oh fearfully tired. Her forehead dropped down on the man’s shoulder, her body went slack; there seemed no more hope for her than for a tree in a hurricane. When her head fell back in despair, while the man devoured her face horribly, one watched her forgotten arm hang down over his shoulder: the tips of the fingers twitched. What was she thinking about, what did women think about – *then?*’
(279)

As a screen presence, Mabelle is dead, not real, and without subjectivity, but here she is for William also alarmingly alive: ‘her personality flashed like a fused wire’ (276). Mabelle’s body is not her own, yet it is shocking in its livingness, a livingness that invites a sense that there is an interiority. For Doane, this figure of the femme fatale registers ‘fears linked to the fading of subjectivity, loss of conscious agency....[wherein the femme fatale’s] textual eradication involves desperate reassertion of control on the part of the threatened male subject’.⁷⁴

This is precisely how Mabelle has been read. In her study of Bowen’s short fiction, Phyllis Lassner thematises ‘Dead Mabelle’ as one of Bowen’s ‘Comedies of Sex and Terror’. These stories ‘enact the violent emotions’⁷⁵ hinted at in her other stories, and it is in those like ‘Dead Mabelle’ that Lassner argues men ‘avenge their betrayed expectations...on women who will not play their assigned roles’.⁷⁶ Lassner reads William’s responses to Mabelle’s images as an accelerating violence that releases his ‘violently repressed eroticism’.⁷⁷ The story, for Lassner, ‘charts William’s growing obsession with and appropriation of Mabelle’s image. In a world in which William has little power he can use his male gaze to construct a figure whose reflection of his desire

⁷⁴ Doane, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Phyllis Lassner, *Elizabeth Bowen: A Study of the Short Fiction* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), p.xiii.

⁷⁶ Lassner, p. 57. Lassner reads ‘Dead Mabelle’ alongside ‘Making Arrangements’, ‘The Cat Jumps’, ‘Telling’ and ‘The Demon Lover’.

⁷⁷ Lassner, p. 59.

makes him feel powerful'.⁷⁸ Mabelle haunts him because, in the end, William has no control over his creation, his fantasy woman. I want to look rather to the side of Lassner's reading, though, and observe that Lassner doesn't actually identify what is funny about 'Dead Mabelle': unlike the other stories in this group, she doesn't explain what makes it a *comedy* of sex and terror. I will come back to this point, but I want to suggest that embedded in her analysis of 'Dead Mabelle' is the assumption that part of William's character – his subject position – is a certain deficiency, what Lassner cites as his 'suppressed erotic desires'⁷⁹ – William creates an erotic fantasy in part because he won't acknowledge his own desires. What Lassner seems to be pitching this argument around is the assumption that William cannot distinguish between authentic and cinematic emotion.

What we might attend to, however, is how William is already in search of a perceptual, or cognitive shock, when he encounters the movies: what he discovers, in Mabelle, I suggest, is not the projection of his own fantasy, but instead is a theory of cinema – of 'reel' feeling. In this way, Doane's observations about the figure of the femme fatale might be connected, through emotion, to Marcus' argument that film initiated a perceptual rupture and 'filmic ontology', a 'blurring of the borderline between the living and the dead'⁸⁰, but that this rupture is intimately connected with an intense visibility of, and preoccupation with, emotion. The blurring Mabelle figures between life and death, emotion and motion, might be read not as a loss of subjectivity, but a representation of subjective emotion as a blindspot in aesthetic theory. In this way the visual detail of Mabelle's sensation demands an attention to how it pictures her feeling and their movements: gestures ripple out from brain to finger-tip, the lips smile.

⁷⁸ Lassner, p. 59.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Marcus, p. 115.

In this visualisation of the ‘feast for the epicure in sensation’ (276), Mabelle is the film, the subject-less actor whose body’s movements themselves become motion without emotion, visualisations of feeling and sensation that may merely elicit reactions rather than form, express or invoke any meaningful emotion.

‘Dead Mabelle’, then, not only registers the kinds of criticism about film spectatorship and mass consumption – and the aesthetic arguments that were emerging – in the 1920s, but it also *mobilises* these discourses, puts them in motion by drawing on the rhetoric and language of film and emerging film criticisms. William is pictured as ‘cinema-shy’ (277), his character given shape through his relations to cinema: ‘he resisted the cinema till a man with important-looking initials mentioned it in a weekly review as an ‘art-form...then he went there with Jim and saw Mabelle’ (277). Bowen’s story figures resistances to film, and anxieties about cinema, as much as it engages with the cinematic itself. Here the dating of Bowen’s text is significant. Although not published until 1929, ‘Dead Mabelle’ pays an acute attention to its timing. The first paragraph introduces Mabelle with an attention to when her death takes place, the cinematic sensation of this timing of her death, and the effect her death has on the speed of film showings. Introducing Mabelle through time, the intensity with which we are reminded of when the story begins, of the time it covers, and of when it leaves us, explicitly makes ‘Dead Mabelle’ about the timing and time of cinema. We begin in what looks like the present, with the ‘sudden and horrible end of Mabelle Pacey’ (276), whose name paces a significant and sensational time for cinema. We are then flashed back to three years in the past, a movement back in time that happens through Mabelle’s visuality itself: ‘Her personality flashed like a fused wire. Three-year-old films of Mabelle – with scimitar-curves of hair waxed forward against the cheeks, in the quaint creations of 1924 – were recalled by the lesser London and greater provincial cinemas’

(276). Here the timing of the story is marked by glamour and the past, to indicate that the story begins sometime in 1927. What seems crucial here is that the timing of Mabelle's death, and of 'Dead Mabelle', has something to say about the time that her filmic career covers: Mabelle's cinema explicitly speaks about the mid 1920s. The importance of time, and the way Mabelle's past bleeds into the uncanny present of 1927, is reiterated a few lines down, when we are brought back to the effect of the release of her last film, just after her death: 'with a sense of foreknowledge as though time were being unwound from the reel backwards, one would see all Mabelle's unconsciousness under the descending claw of horror' (276). Even Mabelle's afterlife with William is a matter of pacing, the effect of her moving in time. The text reminds us that five weeks pass between her death and the showing of her last film; when asked if he's going to see her, William replies 'I don't know that I've got time' (281), and Mabelle herself becomes a matter of time: 'On Monday and Tuesday he did not go to the Picturedrome; he disappeared utterly, no one knew where he had gone. The last day of Mabelle was Wednesday; Wednesday came' (281). Through Mabelle, we are offered a film of cinema itself between 1924 and 1927, a reel wound back and forward to realise something about the movies.

Timing itself, 'Dead Mabelle' interjects in a moment of cinema writing. As David Trotter has observed, the emergence of English film criticism took an important turn in 1925 when Ivor Montagu founded the London Film Society, which aimed to 'exhibit foreign films otherwise unavailable in Britain'.⁸¹ The Society responded to the same preoccupations as the founders of *Close Up*, a journal of cinema criticism and film-writing established a few years later in July 1927. Its ethos was to contest what

⁸¹ David Trotter, 'Virginia Woolf and Cinema' in *Film Studies*, Issue 6 (Summer 2005), pp. 13 – 26, p. 19.

Anne Friedberg describes as the ‘commercial illusionism’ of Hollywood⁸², and the changing cover text of *Close Up* dramatised the journal’s distinctions between its writers’ and readers’ interests in aesthetics, intellectualism, and the avant-garde from more commercial and popular interests in glamour, gossip and Hollywood. The cover of the first edition announced this, describing itself as ‘an English review, the first to approach films from the angles of art, experiment and possibility’ and subsequent *Close Up* covers proclaimed ‘WE WANT BETTER FILMS!!!’; identified the journal as ‘The Official guide to Better movie! – With illustrations from the best films – TECHNICAL. FRIENDLY. INFORMATIVE.’; and reiterated its place as ‘The Only Magazine Devoted to Films As An Art – Interesting and Exclusive Illustrations – THEORY AND ANALYSIS – NO GOSSIP’.⁸³ What is particularly important about the emergence of *Close Up* and the London Film Society, however, is that this literary and critical dialogue about cinema not only set itself against commercial ‘glamour’ films – exactly the kind of films that Bowen’s Mabelle makes – but more particularly did so on the basis of concerns about authentic and experimental aesthetics as opposed to commercial ‘illusionism’ and sensation without meaning, what Woolf expresses as motion without emotion. The title of *Close Up* itself is pitched directly into this concern – as Friedberg observes, the filmic ‘close up’ is a double for ‘magnification through a lens’ and ‘it meant close analysis, scrutiny, an “optic”’.⁸⁴ This twinning of visibility and analysis registers the relationship between the vision and insight preoccupying my earlier discussion of the short story as a form. More importantly, however, the effect of this as a rhetoric of cinema foregrounds the anxieties about emotion implicit in this discussion.

⁸² James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus (Eds.), *Close Up: 1927-1933* (London: Cassell, 1998), p. 3.

⁸³ Cover mottoes cited by Anne Friedberg in her introduction to *Close-Up: 1927-1933* (pp. 1-26). See pages 2, 5, 6, 8 for images of the covers.

⁸⁴ Friedberg, ‘Introduction’ in *Close-up*, p. 1.

Friedberg's discussion highlights how the role of the 'close-up' in the emerging rhetoric of the visual in the 1920s turns on the possibility that intense and framed visibility might register or produce possibilities for reading emotion, which in turn would provide insight into the subject. *Close Up*, then, identifies a preoccupation in the mid 1920s with the philosophical possibilities for film, possibilities that were expressed through a discourse of emotion:

...the close-up was an essential component of *photogenie* – it limited and directed attention, indicated emotion, magnified aesthetic import...the close-up produced revelations of a new emotional and dramatic magnitude in showing the 'microphysiognomy' of the human face...the close-up supplied a new visual order, rendering 'entirely new structural formations of the subject'...The close-up provided a particularly modern optic, a newly revelatory epistemology. As the title for a film journal, *Close Up* implied the conflation of technical specificity with philosophical endeavour'.⁸⁵

These possibilities turned on the ability of the camera to capture emotion as it really is.⁸⁶

The preoccupation with film, writing and aesthetics, then, not only revolves around emotion, but is at the heart of what it came to mean to *be* modern, and, for critics, what enabled the identification of modernist aesthetics.

'Dead Mabelle' is written out of the very discourses about cinema that were circulating at the time the story was written, and this is one way we might read the story as speaking into the silence about cinema. But 'Dead Mabelle' does not merely poke fun or satirise the distinction between Hollywood and experimental cinema and the

⁸⁵ Friedberg, p. 2.

⁸⁶ Marcus observes that the close up's perceived capacity to reveal emotion is historically foreshadowed by Darwin's study *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, which was 'one of the first texts to use photographs to illustrate its arguments'. Marcus also observes that the idea that the close up could disclose, catch, or still human emotion preoccupied both psychologist Hugo Münsterberg, who insisted that to 'picture emotion must be the central aim of the photoplay' and *Experimental Cinema* critic David Platt, who wrote that in '[c]inema, emotion is caught and fixed at the very moment it is felt, in all its purity' (see Marcus, pp. 6-7). Marcus notes that Platt was writing in 1930, whereas Münsterberg was writing 'a few years earlier' than 1921.

emerging discourse of cinema (or the right kind of cinema) as ‘art’ in the mid 1920s, nor does it simply comment on the discourses of emotion and sensation that undergirded these distinctions. Instead, ‘Dead Mabelle’ seems to suggest that, if the close up is to offer a new rhetoric of the visual that might offer new directions for aesthetic and philosophic analysis, it will do so only through an attention to the very commercial illusions these new forums for experimentalism dismissed, because these have something to say about the cinema of emotion itself. And it chooses the form of the short story to do so. Rather than step away from the wet and sentimental ‘eye/I’ of the Hollywood screen, or the commercial position of the short story, ‘Dead Mabelle’ embraces, and is embraced by, it. The story overtly directs itself towards the kinds of epistemological and cognitive shock that writers about the cinema were grappling with. I want to suggest that Bowen, through ‘Dead Mabelle’, is not only participating in modernist writing’s dialogue about cinema, but interrupting it: more specifically, the speaker ‘Dead Mabelle’ interrupts is Virginia Woolf.

It is in relation to the same preoccupations that characterise ‘Dead Mabelle’ that David Trotter contends that Virginia Woolf has something important to say when she (as Marcus might put it) finally does ‘speak’ into the filmic silence on cinema, and it is this that he argues comes to offer the forms of thinking and perceptual shifts that would come to mark her (and modernisms’) literary experimentation. Movie-going, Trotter argues, is crucial to what Woolf, and the experimentalism of literary modernism would come to write. Earlier I noted that, as Laura Marcus observes, Woolf’s attitude to film shifts significantly in the 1920s such that her 1926 essay ‘The Cinema’ is preoccupied not with what film *can’t* do, but rather with what it might. What Woolf pictures as film’s potential is emotion:

If it ceased to be a parasite, how would it walk erect? At present it is only from hints that one can frame any conjecture. For instance, at a performance of *Dr Caligari* the other day, a shadow shaped like a tadpole suddenly appeared at one corner of the screen. It swelled to an immense size, quivered, bulged, and sank back again into nonentity. For a moment it seemed to embody some monstrous, diseased imagination of the lunatic's brain. For a moment it seemed as if thought could be conveyed by shape more effectively than by words. The monstrous, quivering tadpole seemed to be fear itself, and not the statement, 'I am afraid.' In fact, the shadow was accidental, and the effect unintentional. But if a shadow at a certain moment can suggest so much more than the actual gestures and words of men and women in a state of fear, it seems plain that the cinema has within its grasp innumerable symbols for emotions that have so far failed to find expression. Terror has, besides its ordinary forms, the shape of a tadpole; it burgeons, bulges, quivers, disappears. Anger is not merely rant and rhetoric, red faces and clenched fists. It is perhaps a black line wriggling upon a white sheet.⁸⁷

Whilst Woolf's earlier writing about cinema mused on its failure to represent visual emotions and achieve the authentic aesthetic expression that might be achieved in writing, here Woolf identifies that what film can do is offer new emotions and, through experimenting with the technologies of visibility that film makes possible, it may suggest emotion and expression that is, perhaps, more real than that which is expressed linguistically. Woolf's essay registers what Trotter describes as a 'fund of shared preoccupation'⁸⁸ in the mid 1920s for both film-makers, and writers about the cinema, about 'the ways in which movement (and in particular casual movement) defines space'⁸⁹, in particular the space between the audience and film. Although Trotter does not explicitly articulate that what is at stake here is the affective experience of cinema, his discussion of filmic movement and space, and Woolf's interest in the epistemological and ontological possibilities this offers, is discussed in affective terms

⁸⁷Woolf, 'The Cinema', p. 57.

⁸⁸ Trotter, p. 14.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

as the pleasures and thrill of ‘sheer visibility’.⁹⁰ For Woolf, this space is a matter of the relations between the audience and film, in so far as these record and represent the ‘common life’, or the ‘real’, which, in ‘The Cinema’, is expressed in terms of the affective power of the cinema to offer emotion pictures. Thus cinema, according to Trotter, re-wrote Woolf’s sense of literature’s potential.

According to Trotter, the vital difference between Woolf’s writing about the cinema prior to her 1926 essay ‘The Cinema’, and indeed between her writing *Mrs Dalloway* in 1925 and *To the Lighthouse* in 1927, was Woolf’s ‘intermittent habit of going to the movies’: ‘I want to suggest that the understanding of cinema Woolf evolved in very specific circumstances during the early months of 1926 made it possible for her to say things about the common life which she had not quite been able to say in *Mrs Dalloway*’.⁹¹ Drawing on entries in Leonard Woolf’s memorandum books from December 1925, January 1926, a letter from Woolf to Vita Sackville-West dated 13 April 1926, and a note from Woolf in March 1926 about *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*⁹², Trotter draws a neat correspondence between the development of her film and literary aesthetic and movie-going. What Woolf learned to articulate was a shift in writing subjectivity from a representation of presence to what Trotter describes as ‘constitutive absence’ – the sense that the encounter ‘will always in some sense be missed’⁹³: ‘encounters between people living in the same place at the same time were there to be missed; though, with a view to the survival of the species, some had better not be. A community would thrive only if it succeeded in maintaining the appropriate level of

⁹⁰ Trotter, p. 15.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 14.

⁹² Ibid., p. 19. The comment about *Dr Caligari* is not cited by Trotter.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 21.

non-relationship among its members'.⁹⁴ 'Constitutive absence' is precisely about being in the absence of one's self and the problem of how to represent this: cinema, for Woolf, offered a phenomenology of seeing without presence and presence without seeing that put into motion the 'missed' affect of looking that is both singular and not for the self, the sense that 'cinema allows us to behold things "as they are when we are not there"'.⁹⁵ Constitutive absence, Trotter argues, was made visible for Woolf through cinema's 'eyelessness', its motion without subject, its *lack* of encounter between eyes (or audience and actor) and the 'queer sensations' this produces.⁹⁶

Film's fundamental ability to show without telling began, for Woolf, to represent not a failure to produce authentic emotion, but the possibility of producing new emotions, emotions constituted through the very movingness of images. These might change what emotions can be pictured, what expressions might be seen, and these 'innumerable symbols for emotion' would be produced by the very technological possibility to see outside of one-self. The 'tadpole shape' of terror might begin to bulge, quiver and disappear, and anger might exceed the constraints of the subject's linguistic and somatic expression, be no longer 'merely rant and rhetoric, red faces and clenched fists', but become something outside the subject, a feeling that, pictured, is tied to no self to produce it and no self toward whom it is produced, representing instead a new form or symbol, 'perhaps a black line wriggling upon a white sheet'. The openness Trotter traces that emerges in Woolf's thinking about cinema for emotion and subjectivity identifies a clear need to frame emotion as produced or invented rather than expressed by literary and cinematic technologies, and Woolf's essay as attended to by Trotter, and Laura Marcus, indexes a significant shift in what emotion is produced by

⁹⁴ Trotter, p. 21.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

moving pictures. These shifts have strong resonances with 'Dead Mabelle', and certainly it would be possible to see Bowen's story as derivative of Woolf's essay, merely miming what was published just a few months before Bowen's story takes place. But here there are two significant distinctions I would argue that demand a critical close-up of 'Dead Mabelle'.

Whilst Trotter disagrees with Marcus' interpretation of Woolf's writing in the wake of 'The Cinema' as experimental 'cineplay', he does pick out that the feature of Woolf's writing that *invites* Marcus to read this experiment in writing subjectivity is the use of 'visual images to express emotions and animat[e] objects into non-human life'.⁹⁷ For Woolf, experimentalism meant doing something new with subjectivity, by putting emotion pictures to work, differently. But if what allows Woolf to experiment in this way, and construct new forms of subjectivity with her writing (in particular to represent a constitutive absence that corresponded to the cinema's visual emotions), is going to the movies, this innovation is intrinsically linked to going to *specific* movies. Trotter's evidence makes it clear that the movies from which Woolf learns, and the cinema through which her writing may come to innovate, are those shown by the London Film Society. Woolf's cinematic education is determined, in advance, by aesthetic distinctions between art and commercial film. If cinema pictures emotions for Woolf, these emotion pictures already appeal to experimentalism and innovation. While Woolf locates emotion as part of the 'common life' that cinema helps her understand, she develops her understanding (and particularly her understanding of constitutive absence) through a kind of film that has already distinguished itself, aesthetically, from common feeling. In this way, what Woolf discovers about visual emotions tells us less, I would suggest, about emotion, than it does about the aestheticisation of, and discourses about,

⁹⁷ Laura Marcus, quoted in Trotter, p. 22.

emotion through which writing about the cinema in the 1920s mediated the relationship between literature and film.

Trotter reminds us that the relationship between literature and cinema is, in the 1920s, a complex one that cannot and should not be understood in terms of cause and effect, because ‘what mediates literature and film, during that silent era, is literature about film’.⁹⁸ Ann Friedberg recall’s Christian Metz’s observation that writing *about* cinema has always negotiated between producing a discourse about its object and producing the discourse of its object; according to Friedberg, the writers of *Close Up* (the same writers represented by the interests of the London Film Society) ‘reversed this discursive formula’ by ‘advocating a cinema that mirrored the aesthetics and production of their own written discourse: discourse *about* the object’.⁹⁹ What distinguishes Bowen’s ‘Dead Mabelle’ from this is that it is not only overtly constructed out of the very films these writers distinguished their objects of writing *against*, but it does so in the form of a popular fiction that was undergoing the same kind of aesthetic distinctions between mere ‘commodity’ and meaningful experimentations.¹⁰⁰

For Woolf the ability to understand the ‘common life’ comes from the practice of watching primarily newsreels and ‘actualities’, early films that ‘comprised the totality of whatever it was that took place, staged or unstaged’¹⁰¹, in which movement without

⁹⁸ Trotter, p. 24.

⁹⁹ Friedberg, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Given its emphasis on revelation, rather than development of character, and its engagement with the epiphany (and the artificiality of the ‘epiphany’) the short story simultaneously appealed to the mass market and to experimentation with an ease that Mary Louise Pratt argues rendered it a ‘traitor to a much beloved distinction between high and low art’ (p. 111).

¹⁰¹ Trotter, p. 15. Trotter notes: ‘The aim of early films such as the “actualities” produced by the Lumière brothers from 1896 was to show rather than to tell. Taken in long shot from a fixed camera, and lasting about 50 seconds, these early films comprised the totality of whatever it was that took place, staged or unstaged, during the 50 seconds. Visibility itself, the astonishing capture of the way things appear, was the point. “Movement, without topical or dramatic interest, provided the necessary thrill to bring the first film audiences together.” [sic] Workers pour out through a factory-gate; a train arrives in a station, and passengers alight from the carriages; a boat heading out to sea is suddenly caught by a wave, and almost

interest was the basis of thrill or affect, the sort of film that had been largely eradicated from the film market by the advent of narrative cinema. By making the ‘commercial illusionism’ of a Hollywood film the subject of ‘Dead Mabelle’, Bowen offers a fictional theorisation of emotion pictures that takes as its material not an aestheticised determination of the ‘common life’ and record of ‘real’ reality, but instead uses the common or popular interest in narrative film as a way of theorising about emotion. ‘Dead Mabelle’ is important here because it identifies that commercial film can tell us something about a philosophy of being and of emotion that isn’t being set in motion through an emerging intellectual and aesthetic investment in experimentalism. David Trotter’s discussion of Woolf’s cinema-going highlights that American movies had, by 1925, dominated the market and that this domination took the form of a narrative art. These ‘spectacular character-driven narratives’¹⁰² had achieved mass production and consumption through the production of continuity: Hollywood cinema could reduce the ‘locomotive’ affect of cinema, and, by smoothing over the disjunctures of the vision itself, direct the audience away from movement and towards narrative sensation: ‘The spectator, grasping the significance, is absorbed into the narrative process’.¹⁰³ One reason why Woolf prioritises and theorises constitutive absence out of newsreels and actualities, then, is because, unlike narrative film, this cinema does not interpret, or predetermine, the visual emotions: instead the thrill of sheer visibility stands on its own. They achieve what Woolf understands as authentic, surprising and singular emotion: they offer that perceptual and cognitive shock that Woolf will come, by 1926, to see as

overturned. All this movement is of interest only in itself, and for the space it demarcates, the space of that which is of interest only in itself, now uniquely occupied and made manifest. The actualities created a zone, or dimension, in which the “common life” could come into its own as the “real” life’ (p. 15). Trotter quotes from Rachael Low and Roger Manvell’s *The History of the British Film, 1896-1906* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1948), p. 51.

¹⁰² Trotter, p. 14.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 15.

material for innovation. But Friedberg's observation about modernist writers interested in the cinema leads me to suggest that what appeals to Woolf here is not quite the emotions these films picture, but more the way these emotion pictures allow Woolf's innovations in writing subjectivity to mirror the discourse of subjectivity that she brings to watching films. I say this because for Woolf, what cinema shows is something *new*: emotion is pictured differently, it is a locomotive shock, and cinema requires a perceptual and cognitive retraining that is eventually formulated into an aesthetic argument about the self. But for Bowen, the use of mainstream Hollywood film shows this up: emotion pictures are not only seen in experimental, or avant-garde film, or in the newsreels or 'actualities'. These are at work in narrative cinema and, as 'Dead Mabelle' shows, in emotion itself. While Woolf's experimentalism is shaped, in part, by a recognition of what film might teach us, I would suggest Bowen's stories eschew formal innovation because her fiction registers the inventiveness, and emotion pictures, in the everyday. Woolf's contribution to writing about cinema in the modernist period identifies the way cinema pictures new emotions. But Bowen's recognition is that the reason cinema can make us see emotion differently is not because it invents a new technology for emotion, but that it can do so because emotion *is* cinematic.

The reality of subjectivity and emotion, in 'Dead Mabelle', is from the beginning pictured as a problem of reading. William's character turns to cinema because he is looking for a way to read emotion, to form real attachments with others, to know and be known by them. William is 'cinema-shy' (277), caught up instead with getting to know things, and others, as they *really* are. He speculates about the nature of reality, devoting his time to reading philosophy: but not only does an authentic reality elude William, he finds himself at a distance from others. William is 'intelligent, solitary, self-educated, self-suspicious; he had read, without system, enough to trouble

him endlessly...On walks alone or lying awake in the dark he would speculate as to the nature of reality. 'What am I – but *am* I? If I am, what else is? If I'm not, is anything else? *Is* anything...' (277). Despite having acquaintances, William is unable to relate to others – he can't 'get Jim into focus but he supposed he liked him alright' (277), and, when someone reaches out to him, their 'personal touch' is 'imperceptive' (277). William pictures himself unable to feel, to move or be moved. Without really being moved, without emotion, he doubts his own existence, as if 'he was the victim of some practical joke on the scale of the universe of which everybody and everything...were linked in furtive enjoyment' (278). Everyone else is joined by a kind of emotion that William does not have access to through an authenticity of emotion that exceeds his philosophising. When William goes to the cinema and first encounters Mabelle, then, he is already in crisis – he is looking for authentic emotion, the very aesthetic that should be set off by all of his reading, that he should have been trained for. He resists the cinema because its movements are too easy, narrativised, appealing to inauthenticity and sensation without emotion: 'he resisted the cinema till a man with important-looking initials mentioned it in a weekly review as an 'art-form'....he expected Mabelle's appeal to be erotic and went in armoured with intellectuality, but it was not erotic – that *he* could see' (277).

What I suggest he finds in Mabelle, then, is not a crisis of reality, of how the cinema can possibly make him feel when it or she is not real, as Lassner's reading through the figure of the femme fatale might suggest. Nor does William confuse Mabelle's cinematic emotion with that of the actualitie or aesthetic film, mistaking the mere illusionism of commercial sensation with real and authentic emotion. Nor, in fact, would I argue does emotion itself undergo a philosophical transformation. Instead, it is William, and the reader invested in the reality of emotion, that experiences an

epistemological and ontological shock: not of a new emotion, but of what emotion is. In a close-up of a close-up of the relationship between film, emotion, and subjectivity, William enters the cinema for the first time when there is a close up of Mabelle's face – so close that he is 'embraced in her vision' (278). 'Expecting to see himself reflected', William realises there is nothing personal about her eyes, yet still her 'direct look' feels 'as though she leaned forward and touched one' (278). What Mabelle offers William is, precisely, a re-cognition – the apprehension that he has had it wrong: in looking for authentic emotion, for a sense of confirmation of interiority in himself or others, he has failed to see what his narration has already suggested: that emotion is cinematic.

We pause, as readers, and rewind. William, from the beginning of 'Dead Mabelle' is constructed through a deployment of the filmic: he is 'goggle eyed', he 'can't get things into focus' (277) – and at the moments of his most intense doubt, he experienced 'something that felt like an empty barrel rolling over the ups and downs in his brain...' (277). William exists through the cinematic, but he has not yet recognised that there is nothing beyond this; what he needs to relate to others, to 'get them into focus' (277), is not authentic emotion, but a theory of emotion *as* cinema emotion, of interiority as virtual. If we look again at William watching Mabelle, we see that he does not confuse her with reality: what he recognises, finally in the cinema, is that '[i]t had been all very abstract, he recognized in it some hinterland of his brain. He understood that passion and purity, courage, deception and lust were being depicted and sat there watching Mabelle' (278). What he is drawn to is how her 'qualities overlapped strangely; in that black-and-white world of abstractions she alone moved in a blur. Each movement, in unexpected relation to movements preceding it, outraged a preconception. William sat with an angry, disordered feeling as though she were a rising flood and his mind bulrushes' (278).

The power of Mabelle's affect for William is not that she transmits her feeling, but that the strange overlapping of her expressions – these depictions of lust, courage, passion – ruptures what Bennett and Royle, speaking of the cinematic in *Eva Trout*, call the 'fiction of a fluid mobility which silently dissolves one frame into the next'.¹⁰⁴ To gain the 'personal touch', William needs to learn to participate in this fiction. Here, in the centre of Mabelle's 'eye' and William's 'I', at the heart of the kind of Hollywood movie that would, for Woolf, keep 'cinema from standing erect', Mabelle herself becomes the technology of the cinema, her face a blur of emotion pictures. For William, Mabelle is already 'dead' then, before her death, and we might note that Mabelle is 'ma belle' or 'my beautiful'. In 'Dead Mabelle' we read the death of a kind of beauty, the dissolution of an aesthetic, an end to William's search for authentic emotion. In 'Dead Mabelle', then, what dies is not a subject to be reborn through experimentalism as a subject in the absence of itself, for that subject – if it depended on emotion for its expression and confirmation, didn't exist: 'Dead Mabelle' dissolves the perception that emotion has an origin in that subject. No longer originating in the subject, but instead in the motion pictures of the other, 'Dead Mabelle' frames emotion as *reel* feeling.

In 'Dead Mabelle', Bowen kills the very thing Woolf in this period suggests cinema must learn from literature: an aesthetic of interior emotion. The perceptual shock of cinema, then, is not that it can offer motion without emotion, but that this is precisely how emotion works: it is a cinema of the human. Emotion, as Bowen writes of the movies in her 1938 essay 'Why I go to the cinema', makes 'what has never

¹⁰⁴ Bennett and Royle, p. 155. What William experiences recalls Brian Parkinson's argument, discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, that emotion appears and feels like it is simply transmitted, when it is actually generated in the encounter itself through incalculable and imperceptible adjustments, responses and hypothesizing.

happened happen'.¹⁰⁵ It is not that cinema invents this, but that cinema is a technology that makes emotions' event – and inventiveness – visible. Emotion is represented as 'reel', and the use of glamour films in 'Dead Mabelle' suggest not only satire or criticism, but register that this glamour has something to say about emotion. Like glamour, emotion is 'a sort of sensuous gloss: I know it to be synthetic but it affects me strongly'.¹⁰⁶ Gloss and glamour are not contrary to authentic feeling, but, in 'Dead Mabelle', the very technology of emotion. In the edited collection of essays on emotion and impersonality in the twentieth century that I discussed in Chapter One, Margot Reynier points to the way contemporary scholarship is attempting to understand how the impersonal and nonsubjective are still emotional. Embedded in this very question is the modernist disaggregation of motion and emotion. The question Reynier raises assumes that emotion should not endure without the subject. This assumption finds expression in the modernist urge to experiment, to break away from convention and mass feeling in order to produce innovative forms of aesthetic emotion. Bowen's cinema writing, however, suggests not a disjunction between authentic subjective emotion and mechanical movement, but instead the suggestion that this very differentiation – this disjunction – is itself an aesthetic. For Bowen, emotion's very realness is in its verisimilitude; but '[w]hat falls short in aesthetic experience but may do as human experience'.¹⁰⁷ What 'Dead Mabelle' makes visible, then, is that subjectivity and emotion are far from actual. While Mabelle may be 'dead', her subjectivity and emotion are neither dead nor alive, inauthentic nor real: instead the after-image of Mabelle that haunts William after he leaves her last film is pictured as

¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth Bowen, 'Why I go to the Cinema' in *Footnotes to the Film: The Literature of Cinema*, ed. by Charles Davy, advisory ed. Martin S. Dworkin (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1970), pp. 205-220, p. 218.

¹⁰⁶ 'Why I go to the Cinema', p. 213.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

‘burning into him with her actuality all the time. Burdening him with her realness’ (284). Film does not effect subjectivity here: it stands in for it, blurring the distinction between Hollywood and the ‘actualitie’ that mobilises modernist aesthetics.

Earlier, I suggested that Bowen’s short fiction invited a different phenomenology of the short story from Timothy Clark’s ‘blindness’, to suggest what we need is not a model of ‘seeing’ or ‘not seeing’, of ‘vision’ or ‘blindness’, but instead a theory of the short story as emotion – a space where motion, pictures, and fictional feeling overlap. For Clark, what blindness offers is a reading that unsettles the primacy of sight and undoes ‘insight’. But throughout this discussion I have been tracing how it is with a movement between seeing and not seeing that the phenomenology of the short story happens. It is at the level of emotion pictures that insight and blindness are discerned: if the short story revolves around a play of concealing and revealing, then it is through emotion that it turns.

Here I’d like to return to, turn over, the end of ‘Dead Mabelle’. Having gained his cinema theory, William is no longer plagued by the attempt to find real emotion. Instead, he realises it is always fictional, always in movement, whether or not we see that motion – disjunctive or smooth, emotion pictures feel different, but their inventions are made possible because emotion is cinematic. William has not conflated real feeling for an obsession with Mabelle, but instead he has learned a theory of emotion pictures. Later, returning home, he looks again for proof of himself. But now his eyes slide around and ‘looking, without connection of thought, at his books and pictures’ (284) he finds only ‘[g]reasy stains on the tablecloth where he’d slopped his dinner over the edge of his plate, greasy rim round the inside of his hat where he’d sweated. This was how one impressed oneself on the material’ (285). William’s sense of being is not a subject

that can be proven, but a filmy actuality. Here Lassner's categorisation of 'Dead Mabelle' as a comedy might finally stick, because William's cinematic suicide, his 'means to the only fit gesture that he could have offered her' (285), does not affirm that he has lost everything and has no reason to go on but, instead, admits the realisation that this is exactly *how* that 'business of living' (285) goes on. Mabelle's revelation, her cinematic insight into emotion, has made him see that he was looking at it wrong all along.

It was in Mabelle's last film that William finally realises his problem has been looking for real feeling to act as proof of himself – it is in this film that William finally sees in Mabelle's absence his own: 'He looked up with a wrench at his being; advancing enormously, grinning a little at the moment's intensity, Mabelle looked down. They encountered' (282). This is not, however, an encounter of feeling between subjects or presence – it is instead the precise moment that William dissolves these realities – their 'encounter' is not entirely blind, nor is it entirely seeing. Instead it is in this encounter between William, Mabelle and their emotion pictures, that the story reels, between focus and occlusion, insight and sensation, revelation and turning a blind eye:

Gripping the bar tight, William leaned back to look up at the bright, broadening shaft from the engine-room directed forward above him. Along this, fluid with her personality, Mabelle (who was now nothing) streamed out from reel to screen, thence rebounded to his perception. It was all, her intense aliveness, some quivering motes which a hand put out with intention would be able to intercept. The picture changed focus, receded; Mabelle in better perspective, slipped from her horse and stood panting and listening; the horse turned its head, listened too... (282)

Two lines later, the orchestra begins playing – but first, for a moment we have a filmic silence as 'Dead Mabelle' suspends sound for a close up on these emotion pictures: 'Their sympathy, their physical fineness, sent a quiver across the audience' (282).

Tremulous with the oscillation between the absence and presence of Mabelle, William, and indeed feeling, that ‘their’ is dissolved and reformed to dissolve again in a quivering between the film and audience, mobilising a cinematic effect that contests the aesthetic blind-spot on which modernist writers were determining their own literary formations. Crucially, the film that does this is ‘Purblind’. Not only blindness, purblind also refers to the condition of being almost blind, having imperfect perception or discernment.¹⁰⁸ This imperfection can be the condition of both short-sightedness and long-sightedness. Without distinguishing between these, ‘Purblind’ offers William an intimate proximity with Mabelle by introducing him to the impersonality of his self. Gathering to the eye, or ‘I’, the cinematics of affect, this is what ‘Dead Mabelle’ gives to William, and to readers of emotion pictures: the insight that emotion is not proof of themselves, but of the films we leave behind.

The cinematic, in Bowen, then, is not only a matter of technique or subject, but instead a theorisation of the relationship between emotion, pictures and subjectivity – more particularly, these emotion pictures are theorised through the short story. If, as Friedberg argued, those writers in the 1920s who were developing film analysis and theory were cautious to ensure film didn’t subsume its analysis into its own discourses, Bowen’s ‘Dead Mabelle’, written through a form that shares a space in literary criticism with cinema, interjects in the aesthetic distinctions being mobilised by this writing to discern art from movies, and authentic emotion from mere sensation. That the timing of ‘Dead Mabelle’ is so precise demands we consider that Bowen’s story had something to say about this speaking in the cinema. This observation might help us read back through

¹⁰⁸ The Oxford English Dictionary Online entry for ‘purblind’ defines it as being almost blind, partially sighted, or having impaired vision generally. Forms of blindness indicated by purblind are: being completely blind, blind in one eye; myopic (short-sighted); hypermetropic (long-sighted, far-sighted). Through these senses it has also come to refer to having imperfect perception or discernment, lacking in or being incapable of understanding or foresight, being dim-witted or stupid. ‘Purblind’ is also used with reference to Cupid, referring to the idea that love is blind.

Bowen's short story oeuvre to its initial sketches as, although imperfect, snapshots that begin to picture a filmy phenomenology that moves across Bowen's short fiction. In her first two stories, we see 'the tight-glazed noses of the family ready to split loudly from their skins' in 'Breakfast' (CS:15) and the way Lydia Broadbent is 'at odds with herself again...baffled once again by the hostility of Lydia Broadbent, her derision, her unsparing scorn' in 'The Return'(CS:29). In 'The Storm', Rupert's wife 'had trailed away from him' (CS: 187). Indeed it is the filmy tissues of dresses in 'Making Arrangements' that registers the texturalisations and contiguities that are also at work in this phenomenology, as I shall discuss in the next chapter. That the re-reading and re-interpretation of Verbena's innocence is set in motion by a journalist holding, and turning over, her photograph in 'Recent Photograph', suggests that the preoccupations of 'Dead Mabelle' were, along with cinema and the short story, accelerating throughout the twenties. In the thirties, Billy and Daph of 'Mrs Moysey' 'ooze' round their grandmother's door, to be gorged on bonbons until their deterioration is registered in a 'thin brown dribble' running down Daph's frock (CS: 345). In the late 1930s, Mrs Simenez of 'Flowers Will Do' realises she intrudes on her daughter's life; left alone, she sits till midnight, her eyes 'jellies from weeping' (B:258). And, in 1941, 'Tears, Idle Tears' is preoccupied with films, such as Frederick's 'gummy rush of tears' (CS: 482) and the 'celluloid bangle' (CS: 486) of the bespectacled girl. If 'Dead Mabelle' made visible in the 1920s the way literary theory and analysis of cinema was occluding, and occluded by, its failure to acknowledge the cinema of emotion, then this feeling, I would suggest, spread itself across her oeuvre, revolving around emotion pictures.

Chapter Four

Bowen's Feeling for Feeling

In his introduction to *Pictures and Conversations*, Spencer Curtis Brown, Bowen's literary executor and close friend, offers a moving account of how the book came into being. As a kind of autobiography, *Pictures and Conversations* was to offer Bowen's own intervention in Bowen scholarship. In the essay 'People', which would have formed the third chapter, Bowen writes: '[w]hile appreciative of the honour done me and of the hard work involved, I have found some of them wildly off the mark. To the point of asking myself, if anybody *must* write a book about Elizabeth Bowen, why should not Elizabeth Bowen?'¹ Bowen died before finishing the book, and Curtis Brown, following Bowen's wishes, published the essays that should have been the first three chapters of the book, along with her notes about the book's structure and drafts of pieces she had been writing when she died. Of the fourth section, 'Genesis', Curtis Brown had only Bowen's notes:

IV: GENESIS (of a book, in particular of a novel or long short story), Remarks on the growth a book makes while being written. Remarks, also, on the subsequent growth a book makes when, having been published, and the cable having been cut between it and the author, it enters upon an unforeseeable life of its own.²

What, precisely, the 'genesis' of writing was, for Bowen, is not elaborated, but Curtis Brown was insistent that, 'on the impetus which caused Elizabeth to start any one piece of writing, she was quite definite. It did not arise first from a conception of a character,

¹ Elizabeth Bowen, 'People' in *Pictures and Conversations* (London: Allen Lane, 1975), pp.58-63, p.62.

² 'People', p. 63.

or of a conflict, or of a continuing plot, least of all from any urge to express an emotion or illustrate a theory. It was sparked off always from a memory of something seen'.³

That Bowen's work arose *least of all* from the urge to express an emotion registers not only the sense that Bowen's writing invites a reading of emotion, but also the anxieties this produces in her critics that a discussion of feeling will lead to speculation about the author's feeling and life, speculation that might occlude the writing itself. More importantly, it indicates in this the assumption that literary emotion is a matter of expression, specifically, the author's. Certainly this is an assumption Bowen herself seems to invite in 'Origins', the first part of *Pictures and Conversations*, when she associates her interest in the short story with being Anglo-Irish. Defining the Irish and Anglo-Irish by a shared community of feeling conditioned by a country that Bowen would describe elsewhere as one 'in which feeling naturally runs high'⁴, she insists in 'Origins' that '[b]ravado characterises much Irish, all Anglo-Irish writing: gloriously it is sublimated by Yeats. Nationally, we have an undertow to the showy'.⁵ Here a particular feeling is defined by the continuities and contours of Irish identity, culture, locality, literature, and even bodies. It is because of this feeling, Bowen writes, that '[w]e do not do badly with the short story, "that, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth" – or should'.⁶

Bowen's definition of the short story comes, here, in a piece of writing utterly concerned with origins. Rather than unfold the relationship between emotion and the short story, emotion and the bodies, spaces, and literatures that contain or express it,

³ Spencer Curtis Brown, 'Foreword' in *Pictures and Conversations* (London: Allen Lane, 1975), pp. vii-xlii, p. xl.

⁴ Elizabeth Bowen, 'Eire' in *The Mulberry Tree*, Ed. Hermione Lee (London: Virago Press Limited, 1986), pp. 30-35, p. 33.

⁵ 'Origins' in *PaC*, p. 23.

⁶ *Ibid.*

however, her definition challenges the logic that this would involve. That the line is a quotation from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* implies an authoritative definition of the relationship between writing and emotion. Yet the line comes from Act I, Scene I, in which Lysander, addressing 'love', picks up on, and picks at, expectations that what is about to follow is a straight love story: '...for aught that I could ever read,/Could ever hear by tale or history,/The course of true love never did run smooth'.⁷ Rather than gloss the events that are about to unfold, Lysander's speech registers how love tangles, contorts and twists. The only thing that can be grasped about love, he goes on to imply, is its ungraspability. Although the senses 'behold' love, they do not *get a hold* of it:

Love is momentary as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream,
Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth;
And ere a man hath power to say "Behold!"
The jaws of darkness do devour it up:
So quick bright things come to confusion.⁸

Love, then, is like lightning that, 'in a spleen', unfolds both heaven and earth, only to enfold it on the brink of beholding. This unfolding and enfolding 'spleen' is the intertexture of the anatomical organ and the belief that the spleen was the seat of either melancholy or mirth: to be 'in a spleen' is to be in a fit of temper and passion.⁹ To conceive of love this way complicates this unfolding and enfolding even further, displacing it outside the body. Phenomenalised in the spleen's spatial uncertainty, love is *in 'a' spleen*, the spleen that is the lover's love but not their spleen or anyone else's.

⁷ Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. by H. Baker, A. Barton, F. Kermode, H. Levin, H. Smith., M. Edel (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), pp. 251-283, p. 258, lines 132-134.

⁸ Ibid, lines 143-149. 'Momentary' is glossed by the Riverside Shakespeare as 'momentary'.

⁹ The Oxford English Dictionary Online entry for 'spleen' observes that in the 16th century, the spleen was regarded as both 'the seat of melancholy or morose feelings' (entry b) and 'the seat of laughter or mirth' (entry c). Entry 7 notes that when modified by 'a', spleen refers to a 'fit of temper; a passion'.

In nobody, to be ‘in a spleen’ is to be outside oneself even in the deepest feeling, out in space, unfolding heaven and earth.

Bowen’s definition of the short story puts it, and emotion, in the same place, and textures this with a strange and complex spatiality. Emotion is both displaced by the short story (the short story takes the place of ‘love’) and the way the story works – it is *how* the story ‘unfolds both heaven and earth’. That emotion involves a relationship between slippage and its actuation is, already, suggested in Lysander’s speech that, addressing love in a chain of comparisons, does not lay out a logic of love but instead engulfs it. It also puts love in a relation to itself, in which *love* is like itself: rather than unfold, love is folded into a spleen, which itself unfolds and is enfolded by its own movements. These movements, though ‘swift’, are striking in their brevity: though ‘momentary’, love locates eternity in its power to ‘behold’ heaven. That love’s temporality is contingent to what it discerns, and that this temporality and materialisation is itself a movement that implies the eternal and the fleeting is registered in the ‘quick’ that comes to confusion – although quick emphasises the speed of this movement, what is ‘quick’ is also what is endowed with life, what is living. ‘Quick’, however, is also the ‘seat of feeling or emotion in a person, the core of a person’s being’.¹⁰ This materialises, or quickens, a contiguity of texture and time through emotion that not only directly addresses a logic of reading emotion and locating it, but confuses this. Bowen’s intertexture with Shakespeare initiates a phenomenology of both emotion and the short story that, rather than express emotion, or illustrate a theory, challenges the logics these involve. Rather than define the short story, or emotion, Bowen’s definition instead displaces these into each other, displacing a reading of

¹⁰ Oxford English Dictionary Online, entry for ‘quick’.

emotion from reading feeling *in* the text or the *feeling of* the text to the unsettling proposition that we should, instead, ask *how* the text *feels*.

In her essay 'Truth and Fiction', Bowen insists that in writing, time, and timing, is vital: 'every story demands some particular sort of timing of its own...there must be an allotment, a proportioning of time: timing gives emphasis'.¹¹ In giving *emphasis*, Bowen suggests that time gives literature its intensity or force of feeling, its implication.¹² Time's force of feeling is, itself, emphasised by her affirmation that time is what 'pins the reader to that immense "now" which is so important if we are to have a feeling of concern and reality...we may move backwards and forwards but the present moment must grip and hold us'.¹³ Those novels that 'lose their hold on us' do so 'because the author loses their grip on actuality...this causes the feeling of a slurring – the focus in which time should be has been lost, the thing is being mishandled'.¹⁴ Bowen's discussion here pins together time and feeling: the writer must *handle* time, time must *grip* the reader; but it also draws into this the implication of time, that time involves the text and reader, with time they enfold each other. The folding time actuates, its implication, draws out the texture of this feeling, how the feeling of time moves the text. This is apprehended in the intertexture Bowen initiates in 'Notes on Writing a Novel', where she extends Flaubert's injunction that writing *must interest*:

Flaubert's '*il faut intéresser*.' Stress on manner of telling: keep in mind, 'I will a tale unfold'. Interest of watching a dress that has been

¹¹Elizabeth Bowen, 'Truth and Fiction: Time' in *Afterthoughts: Pieces about Writing* (London: Longmans, 1962), pp. 135-143, p. 140.

¹² The Oxford English Dictionary Online defines 'emphasis' as the 'use of language in such a way as to imply more than is actually said; a meaning not inherent in the words used, but conveyed by implication' (entry 1), but also notes that 'emphasis' is both the '[i]ntensity or force of feeling' (entry 3) and the '[s]tress of voice laid on a word or phrase to indicate that it implies something more than, or different from, what it normally expresses' (entry 4).

¹³ 'Truth and Fiction', p. 135.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

well packed unpacked from a dress-box. Interest of watching silk handkerchief drawn from conjuror's watch.¹⁵

'Interest', here, suggests the affect of watching: what interests is what initiates 'a quality of mattering'.¹⁶

That what interests, for Bowen, is a contiguity of textures and time – silk drawn from a watch, a dress, well-packed, unpacked from a dress-box – corresponds with Renu Bora's observation that texture 'expresses how temporality...is intrinsic to the meaning of materiality'.¹⁷ In his discussion of texture, fetishism and Henry James, Bora observes that texture in James's *The Ambassador* emerges through distinctions between 'rough' and 'smooth', 'rubbed' and 'touched'. These textures not only fascinate the character that perceives these textures, but, more importantly, this fascination registers the hypothesising – the interpretive event whose outcome has not yet been decided – that texture invites:

Chad's physical beauty, his texture, makes Strether fascinated, curious in many ways, and also makes him ask the two questions: (1) *How did he get that way?* (2) *What do I want to do with him?* (Stare? Ponder? Or reach out to touch the exciting surface?) Importantly, the questions of material, textural history (How did he get so smooth? Rubbing? Polishing? Heating? Fucking? Defecating?), and the questions of the desire to act upon this material, are answered in overlapping, inextricable ways. That is, the things that one might like to do to Chad have a relationship with the things that one might imagine were done to "make" him, the things that changed him.¹⁸

Texture collapses the temporal boundary between the activities that have made this texture and the actions this texture might make possible, but it also collapses distinctions between perceptual reception and hypothesizing. Texture complexifies the

¹⁵ Elizabeth Bowen, 'Notes on Writing a Novel' in *MT*, pp. 35 – 48, p. 36.

¹⁶ See OED Online, entry 8 for 'interest'.

¹⁷ Renu Bora, 'Outing Texture' in *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*, ed. by E. Kosofsky Sedgwick (London: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 94-127, p. 96.

¹⁸ Bora, p. 94.

temporal movements typically ascribed to active/reactive structures of the sensory and affective experience or phenomena of touching and feeling. Extending Bora's observations, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick remarks:

...I haven't perceived a texture until I've instantaneously hypothesized whether the object I'm perceiving was sedimented, extruded, laminated, granulated, polished, distressed, felted or fluffed up. Similarly, to perceive texture is to know or hypothesize whether a thing will be easy or hard, safe or dangerous to grasp, to stack, to fold, to shred, to climb on, to stretch, to slide, to soak...the sense of touch makes nonsense out of any dualistic understanding of agency and passivity; to touch is always already to reach out, to fondle, to heft, to tap, or to enfold, and always also to understand other people or natural forces as having effectually done so before oneself, if only in the making of the textured object.¹⁹

Although the examples here emphasise tactility, Bora argues that 'texture can be read as synonymous with materiality itself, inasmuch as I am arguing that a kind of inevitable tactility or human agency in performance or in labour, is crucial to any definition of what it means for something to occupy physical space'.²⁰ This discrimination, however, is one that hinges on how texture works on the borders of 'touch and vision': as a problem 'wrought with liminals', Bora observes that not only is texture 'juxtaposed with other (spatial) topologies', but 'textures will also leap forward from their other'.²¹ Texture, then, does not emerge only from materialities that point, reach out, or yield to touch, but also those that appear to preclude or repel it.

Bora observes that 'texture' has two senses, which he distinguishes as 'TEXTURE', the 'surface resonance or quality of an object or material...its qualities if touched, brushed, stroked or mapped, would yield certain properties and sensations that can usually be anticipated by looking', and 'TEXXTURE', the 'stuffness of material

¹⁹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (London: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 13-14.

²⁰ Bora, p. 101.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

structure'.²² Bora's distinction, here, does not differentiate between material's structure and surface, but instead discerns how in 'texture', the sense of depth and surface, interiority and exteriority, are extended into each other and into the intertexture of touch; the scale of 'TEXTURE/TEXTURE' is, rather than wholly intrinsic to the object, textured by the relations and modes of perception to that object. These relations are determined by the intertextures of the TEXTURES of the materials that touch. In asking us to 'imagine how squeezing someone's, say, bicep, can register the various resistances of skin, fat, muscle, and bone'²³, we apprehend that these elasticities, affordances and resistances are not only felt by our touch, but are also felt, as textures, by those materials touched by us. The touch that enables these perceptions also feels its own materials, such as how the sensation of the thumb's phalanx against its tissue multiplies the surfaces and textures of the squeezing thumb.²⁴ The sense of depth is, in this way, implied from texture: '[w]hen a surface...has certain properties, we often project these properties into its interior, and by this interior I mean not just a cavity, invagination, fold, or centre, but the structure, consistency, or TEXTURE of its inner matter that extends liminally, asymptotically, into the surface'.²⁵ Depth does not arrive from

²² Bora, pp. 98-99.

²³ Ibid., p. 100.

²⁴ See Kosofsky Sedgwick's critique of Ann Cvetkovich's 1992 study *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992). Citing Cvetkovich's determination to undertake her study informed by a theorisation of affect 'that does not rest on an essentialist conception of affect' (Cvetkovich quoted in Kosofsky Sedgwick, p. 109), Kosofsky Sedgwick observes that accounts of emotion that emphasise the body's social and cultural construction often, in their own way, essentialise the body by ascribing to it an 'undifferentiated viscosity' that occludes how emotion and affect imply the cultural and material. Theorisations of emotion that do not attend to the body's acuity to its own textures/textures suggest a 'markedly homogeneous, lumpish, and recalcitrant bodily essence, one peculiarly unarticulated by structures or processes involving information, feedback, and representation...For all its antibehaviorist intention, such an account depends implicitly on the strict behaviourist segregation of stimulus from response, even as it propagates that conceptual segregation as humanist common sense' (p. 113).

²⁵ Bora, p. 101.

texture, but is generated in the act of feeling; what we think of as depth is a sense of depth.²⁶

In her reading of Bora, Kosofsky Sedgwick observes that, regardless of whether a material ‘exemplifies’ its texture, or, by blocking or refusing information, ‘insists instead on the polarity between substance and surface’, there is ‘no such thing as textural lack’.²⁷ Texture, then, does not inhere in some materials over others, nor does it adhere to only particular kinds of touch. Texture does not disappear with distance, or appear with proximity: while contiguity determines textures by encountering and moving between varying modes of perception, thus enabling differing theorisations, the spatiality of those contiguities may be as varied and mobile as the encounter permits. What this, finally, introduces to this discussion of texture, is another temporality. The temporal collapse texture registers, between what has happened and what might happen, also challenges a temporality of textural stasis or homogeneity – of movement: if there is no textural lack, then we are also, always, perceiving texture. The sensation of one texture sliding into, catching on or encountering being blocked by another texture implies feeling and time in movement, an effect that Bowen was acutely aware of when she noted that ‘[v]ariations in texture can be made to give the effect of variations in speed’.²⁸

²⁶For example, when Susan Cataldi explores Merleau-Ponty’s theorisation of ‘flesh’ as a reciprocity or reversibility, she suggests that this helps consider how emotional and perceptual depths are intertwined. Cataldi suggests we don’t experience ‘deep’ emotions over things that are superficial, and through this explores how the sense of depth is produced in the context of feeling or perceiving that appears to discover depth. One aspect of Cataldi’s work is to examine the preponderance of ‘in’ when we speak about certain emotions, such as being ‘in love’, ‘in awe’, ‘in shock’ (see Susan Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh: A Study of Sensitive Space – Reflections on Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy of Embodiment* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993)). This corresponds to my discussions of Zoltán Kövecses’ work on emotion metaphors in Chapter One to explore how emotion language generates, rather than describes, the materiality of the body or subject the emotion shapes.

²⁷ Kosofsky Sedgwick, pp. 14-15.

²⁸ ‘Notes on Writing a Novel’ in *MT*, p. 36.

These observations about texture help us to understand Bowen's figures of interest (watching the dress well-packed unpacked from a box, watching the silk drawn from a conjuror's watch) as exemplifying Bora's extension between TEXXTURE and TEXTURE. As figures, these might interest by initiating hypotheses about who has packed, why it is done well, how the veil came to be in the watch. These also indicate a juxtaposition of materials and textures between the dress and its box, or the silk being drawn from the watch. But the examples further figure a *lack* of tactility. These examples interest, involve and imply precisely because they do *not* allow touch. Not only are we 'watching' these events unfold, but we are not given any information about the particularity of these materials: they do not invite an intimacy or closeness with these objects; they are utterly impersonal. The contiguity of these two examples is, itself, a juxtaposition of figurative materials that are closed to touch. Although the figure of the dress offers an openness to its own TEXXTURE by telling us it is 'well-packed', this openness not only reduces hypothesis, but also normalises the relations of materials within it. The second example also blocks its TEXXTURE: by telling us only that the silk is 'being drawn', the history of this structure is erased, it is magic. This is what unsettles. But that it is a conjuror's watch similarly normalises any unusual contacts here. In both examples, their contexts explain their contiguities, as if smoothing the texture of each figure; they are both 'packed' with their meaning. Bora suggests that what is 'packed' connects TEXXTURE and TEXTURE because 'a specific' TEXTURE 'is causally or structurally related to' a specific TEXXTURE.²⁹ The texture, here, doesn't simply originate in its TEXXTURE, but also makes that TEXXTURE perceptible. Bora notes that the 'material world is saturated with labours, and there are

²⁹ Bora explores James' use of 'packed' as being of interest because its 'linkage to queer practice has been made obvious by the (slur?) "fudge packing" ', whereby 'packed' functions to connect TEXTURE and TEXXTURE by innuendo' (p. 118).

many ways in which one can unspring or perceive this labour'.³⁰ The 'packed' object then, is one whose texture is an interpretation of its texture, an object whose texture may be unsprung.

Bowen's figures of interest appear to accede to what Bora identifies as the 'epistemological pressure that *texture* seems to beg',³¹ recuperating, rather than mobilising, the kinds of uncertainty I have argued Bowen's stories suggest are at the heart of emotion. I want to suggest here, and through this chapter, however, that these examples complicate this promise of TEXTURE. Rather than locate interest *in* the 'packed' objects, as a meaning that can be then lifted out, unpacked, this promise is instead what has made them *disinteresting*. What interests is not that these textures are open to us, but that they are closed to each other - they materialise interest as a movement between textures that do not touch. Put alongside each other, these examples initiate a proximity that is discerned by the distance, the lack of contact, between them. It is this discontiguity that moves us to watch, that interests, and implicates us. The temporality of this intertexture with Flaubert materialises not *in* either image, but in the movement between these, the space that allows us to discern their textures, their differences, and affordances.³² It is this spatiality, rather than the topology of these

³⁰ Bora, p. 100.

³¹ Ibid., p. 115.

³² My thinking in this chapter was initiated by Santanu Das' conclusion to his study *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Das' study undertakes a careful and provocative reading of the proximities initiated by the trench life, conditions of military hospitals, and indeed the wounds of soldiers, during the First World War. For Das, these contiguities invoked ontological insecurities that might be located in the preoccupations WWI writing had with figures of slime, mud, wounds. Das' study in part offers a compelling complication of those readings of Bowen that accord such insecurities to the Second World War, and importantly reminds us of the inter-war context of Bowen's emergence as a writer. But Das makes a curious move in his conclusion. Throughout his study he focuses on the ways in which the figurative preoccupations of his case studies demonstrate the ontological invasions effected by the war, and ascribes the war's effects to this sense of a body being 'undone' by the war. In the conclusion however he observes that of all the archives, museums and installations about the war that he visited for research, the most moving were those in which the curators did not try to stage or recreate the experience of war life to put us 'in touch' with the feeling of the war, but instead those in which artifacts and objects are *not* touchable. It is precisely the work of not

textures, that initiates the ‘interest’, the force of feeling that is textured by Bowen’s intertexture with Flaubert. Interest works through the sensation of a promise that those textures, those surfaces, might offer or yield an interior, a TEXTURE that might be lifted out, made accessible through epistemological pressure. It is this promise that is offered by the silk ‘being drawn’ from the conjuror’s watch, the dress ‘well-packed unpacked’. Yet in these examples interest also maintains a temporal pull that corresponds across various interpretive possibilities that might be discerned; in this sense, what Bowen’s intertextuality with Flaubert offers is a figuration of interest, and emotion, that phenomenalisises it as a liminality between interpretations, yet that makes interpretation possible. Interest is registered as an interpretive event rather than the particular meaning yielded by that event.³³

The ‘interest’ of Bowen’s intertextuality with Flaubert has, throughout this discussion, implied emotion – that there is an ‘intuition that a particular intimacy seems to subsist between textures and emotions’³⁴ – is confirmed by Kosofsky Sedgwick, who argues that if these ‘seem to belong together it is not because they share a particular delicacy of scale, such as would necessarily call for “close reading” or “thick description”’. What they have in common is that *at whatever scale they are attended to*, both are irreducibly phenomenological’.³⁵ Not only does Bowen’s literary return to

touching that he argues is most moving: ‘Why do these objects move and disturb us so much? These objects not only congeal time but also conceal processes of touch...these objects preserved and exhibited behind glass-panels, cannot be handled’ (p. 236). For Das, this leads to the conclusion that these objects ‘are the site of actual touch, we can gain access to the intimate encounter between people, places, objects and the emotions such meetings generate’ (p. 237). For this reason Das argues that what moves us is the feeling ‘unsprung’ from these objects. My arguments here disagree with this – rather than read ‘touch’ as residing in a particular site or object to be ‘unsprung’, I am interested in how it is the ‘unspringing’ without resolution that is affecting.

³³ This is one of the contributions Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Touching Feeling* makes not only to the study of emotion but to thinking about textual practice, through her engagement with Silvan Tomkins: affect involves movements along a continuum of interest (p. 97). In particular Tomkins situates interest as one ‘end of the shame-interest continuum’. See also my discussion of ‘disgust’ in Chapter One.

³⁴ Kosofsky Sedgwick, p. 17.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Flaubert identify ‘interest’ in place of ‘emotion’, but, in doing so, it exemplifies how the stasis that the singularity of interest might appear to identify is destabilised; interest works through a slippage, rather than security, of its emotion. This phenomenology of interest mobilises emotion as an interpretive event, rather than an epistemological certainty. Bowen’s return to Flaubert may remind us to recall that ‘[s]tress on manner of telling: keep in mind, “I will a tale unfold”’, but while her return to Flaubert promises to *unfold* interest, her very manner of telling, of producing interest’s texture, makes it, and emotion, at its most singular and identifiable, a conjuror’s ‘reveal’.

It is precisely this play of texture and epistemic pressure that textures and times the text of Bowen’s short story, ‘Unwelcome Idea’, in which two women ride a Dublin tram.³⁶ Miss Kevin and Mrs Kearney are introduced through the similarities and distinctions of their textures: ‘They both have high, fresh, pink colouring; Mrs Kearney could do with a little less weight and Miss Kevin could do with a little more’ (374). Not only are they textured – brought out from the background into view – by their colouring, but their weight speculates the density, volume, and texture of their materiality, how they occupy physical space. Even the quality of their friendship is anticipated with a sense of their materiality, their relation to each other: ‘...they are enthusiastic, not close friends but as close as they are ever likely to be’ (574). It is the textures of their encounter that times, and places, the story. Miss Kevin, with a ‘virgin detachment’, has ‘kept thumbing her sales parcels, and now...cannot resist undoing one. ‘Listen’, she says, ‘isn’t this a pretty delaine?’ (575). Feeling the fabric her undoing releases, Miss Kevin’s touch locates the story: ‘She runs the end of a fold between her finger and thumb. ‘It drapes sweetly. I’ve enough for a dress and a bolero. It’s French:

³⁶ ‘Unwelcome Idea’ (CS, pp. 573-577) first appeared in *New Statesman* Issue 20 (10 Aug. 1940), pp.133–34. It was collected a year later in *Look at all those Roses*.

they say we won't get any more now' (575). In fingering the fabric, Miss Kevin not only fingers the context for the story – the war – but, more importantly puts a finger on the story's distance from, rather than proximity to, the war. What the war impresses on Miss Kevin and Mrs Kearney, after all, is that they won't get French delaine, nor 'that Coty scent' anymore (575). That Miss Kevin and Mrs Kearney's preoccupations don't apprehend the feeling of war is given a final touch when Miss Kevin, getting off the tram, exchanges 'bye-byes' with Mrs Kearney:

...the tram clears the crowd and moves down Dun Laoghaire Street, between high flights of steps, lace curtains, gardens with round beds. 'Bye-bye to you,' said Miss Kevin. 'Happy days to us all.'

Mrs Kearney, near the top of the stairs, is preparing to bite on the magazine. 'Go on!' she says. 'I'll be seeing you before then.' (577)

The readers of *New Statesman*, the magazine that published 'Unwelcome Idea' in August of 1940, may have felt, like Mrs Kearney, a certain bite. The cheery conclusion, just too tender, might have probed the sore-spot of Britain's absent men, undermining rather than affirming Miss Kevin's stoicism, while Mrs Kearney's bite on the magazine is uncomfortably loaded. With France so recently occupied, the story registers a violently innocuous intersection of national sentiments that its reader may have chewed over that summer, such as being 'bullet in mouth', 'biting the bullet', 'gritting one's teeth', and things 'blowing up in your face'.

'Unwelcome Idea' suggests a national character apprehensive about how, or what to feel. That the story, and its readers, were not only preoccupied by threats of occupation and unsure how to handle it, is woven into the dialogue: 'Wasn't it you said we had to keep off the roads?' 'That's in the event of invasion, Mrs Kearney. In the event of not it's correct to evacuate.' (576). Yet these apprehensions also form the very

fabric of the narrative structure. Opening with a visual sweep, the narrator, like a search light, pans the landscape and villas of Dublin bay, observing that ‘in the distance, floating across the bay, buildings glitter out of the heat-haze on the neck to Howth’ (573). The scale of what the story is able to comprehend is amplified by the volume of detail it offers, from the ‘the whole bay open’ to the ‘low-lying villas...fitted between earlier terraces’ (573). There is nothing the story can’t apprehend, picking out even that ‘an inner door left open lets you see a flash of sea through a house’ (573). Sharpening with a telescopic focus from the ‘point’ at which ‘you see the whole bay open’ into and along the tram that ‘slides to stops for its not many passengers’ (573), the text searches out the tiniest of details: the ‘[h]ousewives with burnt bare arms’ (573), the ‘[f]orgotten Protestant ladies...squeezed between the kerb and the shops’ (573), the ‘file of booted children’ with ‘a nun at the head like a needle’ (574), and children that ‘by themselves curl their toes in their plimsoles’ (574). This topographical scrutiny goes on for two pages, and even when it focuses on the meeting of Miss Kevin and Mrs Kearney, its clarity of focus, the precise textures of their encounter, is maintained:

By half-past eleven this morning one tram to Dalkey is not far on its way. All the time it approaches the Ballsbridge stop Mrs Kearney looks undecided, but when it does pull up she steps aboard because she has seen no bus. In a slither of rather ungirt parcels, including a dress-box, with a magazine held firmly between her teeth, she clutches her way up the stairs to the top. She settles herself on a velvet seat: she is hot....Mrs Kearney has finished wedging her parcels between her hip and the side of the tram and is intending to look at her magazine when she stares hard ahead and shows interest in someone’s back. She moves herself and everything three seats up, leans forward and gives a poke at the back. ‘Isn’t that you?’ she says.

Miss Kevin jumps around so wholeheartedly that the brims of the two hats almost clash. ‘Why, for goodness’ sake!...Are you on the tram?’ (574)

With a resolution so attuned that it not only picks up the minutiae of the moment, but also the very details that belie the characters' interiority, the story, having secured these, turns its focus to the movements of Dublin's population, their uncertainties of action now explained by the apprehensions with which we, as readers, have been put in touch. Less than a month after the story was published the Blitz would begin, and after this it would be impossible to read 'Unwelcome Idea' without being seared by the relative stability and security of its characters, and the divisiveness about Irish neutrality it touches. By the time a reader might pick it up in *Look at all those Roses*, published by Gollancz in 1941, Mrs Kearney's ability to declare that 'this war's getting very monotonous' (576) could, itself, be explosive.

'Unwelcome Idea' registers a twinning of the visual with surveillance in an atmosphere where security is always doubled with suspicion. The tone of orientation offered by the omniscient narrator echoes that of a voice-over, lending the story the cinematic effect of a war effort news reel, a medium the British Film Institute notes 'found its voice' during World War II, 'communicating vital news mixed with propagandist uplift'.³⁷ But the war's presence is off-scene, materializing Bowen's observation that news reels in Ireland 'gives one the feeling of an invented world – one may watch social functions (not connected with war effort), trotting-races in the sunny Dominions...No film drama featuring or hinging on the present war (or even, I understand, the 1914 war) may be shown'.³⁸ Resonating with the literary, propagandic, and ethnographic promises of the visual, 'Unwelcome Idea' not only affirms Laura

³⁷ British Film Institute 'Newsreels' <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/476463/index.html> (last accessed July 17th, 2010).

³⁸ 'Eire' in *MT*, p. 33.

Marcus' argument that cinema and war are the 'twin technologies of modernity'³⁹, but points forward to Bowen's speculation, in 1945, that '[t]he cinema, cinema-going, has no doubt built up in novelists a great authoritarianism'.⁴⁰ The cinematic techniques of 'Unwelcome Idea' exploit the powerful effects of seeing and being seen, effects Bowen noted, after the war, when she wrote that narration

*must...involve very careful, considered division of the characters ...in the seeing and the seen. Certain characters gain in importance and magnetism by being only seen: this makes them more romantic, fatal-seeming, sinister. In fact, no character in which these qualities are, for the plot, essential should be allowed to enter the seeing class.*⁴¹

The story 'sees' Mrs Kearney and Miss Kevin of Dublin bay, spotlighting a population whose neutral status presented an uncertainty for Britain, as if locating and neutralising the anxieties that permeated the atmosphere of Britain in the summer of 1940, by relocating these in Dublin's inhabitants. And while a British reader might have recognised in themselves Miss Kevin's frustration that 'with the instructions changing so quickly it's better to take no notice' (575), or Mrs Kearney's accusations that the A.R.P. 'stopped the Horse Show' (576), this unsettling or unwelcome idea seems contained by the insight that these sentiments are located in, and originate from, the very lack of insight Mrs Kearney and Miss Kevin have about the war.

'Unwelcome Idea' puts into practice Bowen's insistence that good writing should be that in which, like a good film, 'movement, angle and distance have all worked towards one thing – the fullest possible realization of the director's idea, the

³⁹ Laura Marcus, 'The Great War in Twentieth-century Cinema' in Vincent Sherry (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the First World War* (Louisiana: Tulane University Press, 2005), pp. 280-301, p.280.

⁴⁰ 'Notes on Writing a Novel' in *MT*, p. 43.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

completest possible surrounding of the subject'.⁴² But in doing so it realises how the cinematic twins documentary intimacy with invasion. In her preface to the *Demon Lover and Other Stories*, Bowen observes the filmic quality of her war-time stories: these have 'made for the particular, spot-lighting'.⁴³ In 'Unwelcome Idea' this spot-light is turned on an Irish neutrality that Bowen, in her essay 'Eire', describes as 'inflammatory' to a Britain with 'not much idle angry feeling to spare'.⁴⁴ As an excerpt from Bowen's reports on Irish neutrality for the Ministry of Information 'Eire' very likely shares its observations with those of 'Unwelcome Idea'.⁴⁵ Rather than address only the Ministry of Information, however, 'Unwelcome Idea' addresses Britain. As, perhaps, a means of defusing the home-front's perception of Ireland as 'passively hostile and in some senses rather inhuman'⁴⁶, 'Unwelcome Idea' initiates an illumination, both on the home-front and in Ireland, of this perception of a 'national childishness, a lack of grasp on the general scheme of the world'.⁴⁷ Yet, in making these 'comprehensively understood'⁴⁸, the story can't avoid doubling illumination with a feeling of speculation, and suspicion. Indeed this might be one way of understanding the disaffection Bowen's work for England's Ministry of Information has elicited from some critics when placing her, as discussed in Chapter One. That Bowen's war stories register uneasiness, however, is not merely an after-effect felt by critics contending with her personal and national dislocations. The story itself mobilises, in its very comprehensiveness, a series of complex contiguities that suggest a propagandic case

⁴² 'Notes on Writing a Novel', *MT*, p. 43.

⁴³ Preface to '*The Demon Lover*' in *MT*, p. 99.

⁴⁴ 'Eire', *MT*, p. 30.

⁴⁵ Hermione Lee notes: 'This report on Ireland's neutrality came out of Elizabeth Bowen's wartime work for the Ministry of Information, which took her to Dublin in 1940 and 1941 to ascertain Irish attitudes to the war (*MT*, p. 300, note to p.30). See Chapter One of this thesis for a discussion of Bowen's war-work in relation to her critical dislocation.'

⁴⁶ 'Eire', *MT*, p. 30.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

study that fingers the ‘unwelcome idea’ of Irish neutrality, and, through this, provides a way to articulate the ‘unwelcome ideas’ of disillusionment and disagreement that might have circulated amongst the British public. The danger that such a sympathy might register a community of feeling, suggesting an enemy within, however, seems to be neutralised by the way those sentiments are aligned with a lack of proximity to the war, expelling sentiments that might undermine the war effort into the Dublin bay whose neutrality is brought home to Britain.

‘Unwelcome Idea’ exemplifies, then, the cultural politics of feeling that Sara Ahmed argues work to delineate individual and collective bodies, delineations that involve complex ‘histories of articulation’.⁴⁹ In her discussion of a British National Front poster, Ahmed points out that the ‘you’ these posters name works to simultaneously identify a national body, a ‘we’, to which ‘you’ belongs, that possesses certain feelings, and in doing so, discerns an ‘other’ body that is ‘the ‘source’ of our feelings. For Ahmed, contact with these objects, in the form of things or other bodies, generates feeling, and this feeling cannot be separated from emotion. The point, for Ahmed, is that emotions are not what emerge from an interiority, but rather are what ‘create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place’.⁵⁰ The feeling of a ‘you’ and ‘we’ does not secure the location of emotions, but instead locates how emotion discerns between objects, how ‘it is through emotions that surfaces or boundaries are made; the ‘I’ and the ‘we’ are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others’.⁵¹ In her discussion of ‘hate’, Ahmed argues that it is the relations between figures that generates movement, and this movement ‘produces a differentiation between ‘us’ and ‘them’,

⁴⁹ Ahmed, p. 53.

⁵⁰ Ahmed, p. 10.

⁵¹ Ibid.

whereby ‘they’ are constituted as the cause of ‘our’ feeling of hate’⁵². Crucially, what mobilises the affects she reads is precisely their failure ‘to be located in a given object or figure’.⁵³

Although Ahmed’s reading is particularly interested in what she discerns as ‘hate’ texts, her observations are helpful in apprehending the anxious effects of Bowen’s textural distinctions between the seen and not seen, the touched and not touched, in ‘Unwelcome Idea’. These distinctions thicken into the kinds of containment effects Ahmed describes through the texts’ narration, which, as if seeing from above, is not only able to discern the topographical contexts that bring Miss Kevin and Mrs Kearney into contact with each other, but to ascribe to these the very order or orientation, the comprehension, that the characters lack. The sheer volume of detail, the specificity of the distinctions, the precision of ‘ozone smells’ (573), even the pronouncement that ‘the modern will sag, chip, fade’ (573), all ring with the tactics Ahmed observes of the propagandic, and this is materialised in the story’s address, throughout, to an implicit ‘you’. The *implicitness* of the story’s addressee, however, is punctuated, twice, near the beginning of the story: it is *you* that can ‘see the whole bay open’ (573) and *you* that is able to ‘see a flash of sea through a house’ (573). These moments suggest a capacity to penetrate what is being observed, to open it and peer into or behind the figures that texture the scene. That these generate their effects through an ability to move *into* the object, or comprehend it in its entirety, without being affected by it renders this ‘you’ with an impermeability. In this sense the ‘you’ has the capacity to see, penetrate, examine, and comprehend without being contaminated by its proximity to what it touches. Texture emerges here at the level of the topographical. But

⁵² Ahmed, p. 48.

⁵³ Ahmed, p. 48.

the agency of these textural perceptions is involuted: ‘you see the whole bay open’ because you are, then, ‘at a point’, and ‘you see a flash of sea through a house’ because ‘an inner door left open lets you’ (573). The penetration that has been achieved is not only permitted by the objects themselves, but invited. While appearing to secure the distinction between ‘you’ and ‘Dublin bay’ the dependence of the explicit ‘you’ on the topologies perceived instead registers that, as Renu Bora observes, ‘textures leap forward from their other’.⁵⁴ This, for Ahmed, exemplifies the deconstructions of security, generating the affects through which we might locate in Bowen’s text an ontology of insecurity.⁵⁵ Textured by a language of invasion, excess and encroachment, such an ontology ‘speaks the language of “floods” and “swamps”, of being invaded by inappropriate others’.⁵⁶

Certainly these are the textures at work in ‘Unwelcome Idea’, where the story’s divisions between the seeing and the seen, the touched and not touched by war, an ‘us’ and ‘them’, lose distinction at the story’s moments of greatest concentration: Mrs Kearney is first ‘a slither’ (574) and later ‘flutters’ (575); an ‘immense glaring reflection floods’ (573); the shopping centre ‘congests’ (573); the tram ‘slides’ (573). What naturalises boundaries, distinctions, and containments, strains against these, and is undone: dresses ‘stick close to their backs’ (574), parcels are ‘bursting out from their string’ (574), and the heels of evening slippers ‘protrude from a gap at the end of the dress box’ (577). Even the striking observation that the tram driver, twice, ‘smites his

⁵⁴ Bora, pp. 101-102.

⁵⁵ This ‘ontology’ is, Ahmed notes, ‘narrated as a border anxiety’ (p. 148). For her discussion of the anxious affects involved in securing borders see her chapter ‘The Affective Politics of Fear’ in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, especially pp. 75-77.

⁵⁶ Ahmed, p. 76. Maud Ellmann observes this of Bowen’s writing when she remarks that Bowen’s ‘syntax – with its double negatives, inversions, and obliquities; its attribution of the passive mood to human agents, and of the active mood to lifeless objects – constantly ambushes our ontological security’ (Ellmann, p. 7).

bell' (574, 577), loses distinction through its etymological echo of 'smear'.⁵⁷ And, whether Miss Kevin and Mrs Kearney's exchange, at the end, is overly sentimental or distasteful, its inadequacy is almost overwhelmingly tacky. While this can't help but exemplify the Irish 'lack of grasp' on the war, it also sticks, uncomfortably, in the throat of a Britain that might recognise these as expressions of its own, secret, sentiments. These slithers, flutters, and smears, the tackiness of 'Unwelcome Idea' extends the filmy phenomenologies of Bowen's emotion pictures, discussed in the previous chapter, and demand an attention to the relationship between emotion and the textures of her short stories.

For Bowen, the problem of British and Irish relations *was* a matter of feeling: 'Eire feels as strongly, one might say as religiously, about her neutrality as Britain feels about her part in the war'.⁵⁸ What Bowen's report recommends, if these relations are to 'stand, as they must stand, this present strain', is '[t]ime and *tact*, on which there are many demands already'.⁵⁹ 'Tact' reiterates the ontology of insecurity that Ahmed describes. This sensitivity to touch is also a keen discrimination of feeling and sensitivity to the appropriate, correct, and proper: to have tact, to use tact, suggests the tactics that feelings require. In this sense Bowen's tact extends what Ahmed observes of the affects of security to thinking about emotion itself. As Zoltán Kövecses' study of metaphors of emotion demonstrates, not only do our metaphors for emotion deploy figures of containment, but these containments fail.⁶⁰ While discourses about emotion have tended to either naturalise or debate the location of emotion 'inside' or 'outside' the topologies that these containers (whether corporeal, material or object) imply,

⁵⁷ See the Oxford English Dictionary Online for 'smite' (verb).

⁵⁸ 'Eire' in *MT*, p. 31.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31. *Italics mine.*

⁶⁰ See pp. 216-223 of Kövecses' study *Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture and Body in Human Feeling* for his index of metaphors and metonymies of emotion.

Ahmed's discussion helps us to observe that these figurative breaches do not affirm these boundaries, but, rather, affirm that emotion materialises these boundaries. I will go on to suggest that there is an important distinction to be made between the texts Ahmed analyses and Bowen's, and that this distinction turns around what Bowen's texts *do* with their textures. But I want to note here that, while different emotions may mobilise different materialisations of these boundaries – thickening them, turning them into an object, thinning them to sheer proximity, dissolving, opening, and enveloping them even – the work of emotion is the discernment that phenomenalisises these boundaries. 'Unwelcome Idea', then, not only indexes the importance of textures in Bowen's work, but turns our attention to the way those textures feel.

These observations help us to develop Phyllis Lassner's treatment of Bowen's short fiction as an 'investigation into the boundaries between past and present and fiction and history pos[ing] literary, social, ideological, and epistemological questions'⁶¹ by attending to the way the textures of her short fiction suggests a peculiar sensitivity to the affects of the topographies that her stories engage with. Rather than simply provide a lens through which to see or comprehend answers to such questions, these textures complicate the very notion of insight emotion might offer. This in turn suggests we reconsider some of the critical interest those topographies have invited. I have observed the concentration of interest Bowen's critics have had on her novels, leaving her stories comparatively understudied. But of the seventy nine stories widely available to critics through the *Collected Stories* (a number recently supplemented by Allen Hepburn's 2008 *The Bazaar and Other Stories*, an edited collection of previously uncollected and unpublished work, including some unfinished stories) very little attention has been paid to those written before the war. Of the sixteen or so grouped as the 'War Years' in the

⁶¹ Lassner, p. xii.

Collected Stories, those that have been spot-lit by Bowen scholarship tend to be from *The Demon Lover and Other Stories*, published by Jonathan Cape in 1945. What has drawn interest tends to be described by Bowen's critics as the sense that these stories attest to the peculiarities and singularities of the Second World War, capturing, as Bowen, in her preface to *The Demon Lover* collection wrote, the 'strange growths' it raised.⁶² The particularity of these 'strange growths' lies in their attention to the sensations of dislocation and dissolution – they exemplify the way the war affected boundaries of space, time, and subjectivity. In her 1977 biography of Bowen, Victoria Glendenning insists that although Bowen's novel *The Heat of the Day* affirms that the 'war years were Elizabeth's noon, and *The Heat of the Day* the book that came out of it'⁶³, it was in the war stories that Bowen learned to handle this material, and develop her grasp of the war's dissolving effects. In these, Glendenning contends, Bowen's emphasis on the relationship between changes in subjectivity, space and time merged the topologies of things, people and places, collapsing the distinctions that had determined life before the war:

Psychologically, one of the results of the war for Elizabeth was the breaking down of boundaries and barriers. 'It seems to me that during the war in England the overcharged subconsciousnesses of everybody overflowed and merged.' 'Life with the lid on' was over for good...It happened socially, as it did for all previously sheltered people, in a rather obvious way: in her neighbourhood, and in her work at the warden's post and on patrols, for example, she was brought into close contact with people she would not normally have become intimate with....But it goes further than this. She felt the 'thinning of the membrane between the this and the that'....The 'wall between the living and the dead thinned', as did the wall between the living and the living...Nearly all the short stories she wrote during the war have this element....the barriers of time and reality break down.⁶⁴

⁶² Preface to '*The Demon Lover*' in *MT*, p. 95.

⁶³ Glendenning, p. 142.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143.

It is this susceptibility to how things ‘break down’, the disintegration of barriers of time, space, subjectivity – the boundaries that differentiate the real from unreal – that places, for Shafquat Towheed, the emergence of Bowen’s aesthetics of displacement and dislocation as both late modernist and anticipating postmodern spatiality.⁶⁵ In his study, Towheed picks up the invitation extended by Bowen to critics interested in the unique affects of her writing when she wrote ‘Origins’, the first chapter of her unfinished autobiography:

Few People questioning me about my novels, or my short stories, show curiosity as to the places in them. Thesis-writers, interviewers or individuals I encounter at parties all, but all, stick to the same track, which by-passes locality. On the subject of my symbology, if any, or psychology (whether my own or my characters’), I have occasionally been run ragged; but as to the *where* of my stories, its importance in them and for me, and the reasons for that, a negative apathy persists....Failing to throw a collective light on my art, my places tend to be thought of as its accessories, engaging enough to read of but not ‘meaningful’. Wherefore, Bowen topography has been untouched by research. Should anyone give it a thought after I am dead, that will be too late. To it, only I hold the key.⁶⁶

Bowen suggested that critics had failed to research the ‘Bowen topography’ because it, like she, does not locate easily: ‘The Bowen terrain cannot be demarcated on any existing map; it is unspecific’.⁶⁷ For Shafquat Towheed, it is the ‘unspecific’ that has gained its place in the revival of critical interest in Bowen: ‘Bowen’s critics have, almost without exception, noted the centrality of place and its discontent, *displacement*, in her fiction’.⁶⁸ But for Towheed, this emphasis on *displacement* has also displaced the

⁶⁵ Shafquat Towheed, ‘Territory, space, modernity: Elizabeth Bowen’s *The Demon Lover and Other Stories* and wartime London’ in Osborn, Susan (Ed.), *Elizabeth Bowen: New Critical Perspectives* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2009), pp. 113 – 131, p. 113.

⁶⁶ Elizabeth Bowen, ‘Places’ in *Pictures and Conversations* (London: Allen Lane, 1975), pp. 34 – 57, pp. 34, 36.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 35.

⁶⁸ Towheed, p. 113.

textures and surfaces that make up Bowen's topographies – the complexities of how her fiction handles space, and, in particular, the spatialities of a London whose bombing had 'blasted into the fabric of a city'⁶⁹:

While academic criticism has increasingly noted the importance of specific physical locations and their imaginative and psychological implications in Bowen's writing, relatively little attention has been paid to the complexities of space – physical, temporal, acoustic, emotional, social, mental and creative, to name but a few – recursively opened up and closed down in her fiction, a fiction that tends at once to both claustrophobia and agoraphobia, to both stasis and constant flux.⁷⁰

For Towheed, it is Bowen's feel for the complexities of space that allows her stories to register the psycho-geographies formed by these intersections, and makes Bowen's war-time stories a compelling case study for how war's landscapes stimulated the 'burgeoning clinical interest in the psychopathology of space and its discontents'.⁷¹ Citing the emergence of air-raid phobia, Towheed observes that clinicians at the time pathologised the phobia as an irrational condition of 'overanxious superstitious people'.⁷² Yet, argues Towheed, Tom Harrison's readings of the Mass-Observation records show that the 'spatial dislocation of Londoners living through the Blitz, and the fear, anxiety, or even feelings of euphoria that the destruction of space produced, was not therefore confined...it was ubiquitous'.⁷³ Towheed argues that it is precisely this ubiquity of war-time feeling, provoked by changes in London's spatialities, that is mapped by, and can be mapped in, Bowen's stories.

⁶⁹ Towheed, p. 119.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 114.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 118.

⁷² Air-raid phobia is the 'exaggerated fear of many patients that the air raids were specifically and personally targeted at them' (Towheed, p. 119).

⁷³ Tom Harrison, *Living Through the Blitz* (London: Collins, 1976) cited in Towheed, p. 119.

As representations of the changes to the fabric of London, Bowen's *Demon Lover* stories also represent the emotional effects of these changes for London's inhabitants. Thus the stories, Towheed argues, locate 'space[s] created (emptied or filled in) by an 'explosion' (past, current or anticipated) of one sort or another'.⁷⁴ The stories are, like wartime London and its inhabitants, torn and blasted, and, as the inhabitable spaces of London diminish, so too do the boundaries between its people, accounting for the claustrophobic affects that surface in the wake of Bowen's Blitz stories: '...space – physical, emotional and imaginative, and not just elbow room in a crowded restaurant – is at a premium....[c]lose proximity in wartime London extended beyond the physical – the cheek-by-jowl seating in restaurants, the attempt to keep three fresh eggs unbroken – and into the emotional and the imaginative'.⁷⁵

In Towheed's account of the spatiality of the *Demon Lover* stories, these acquire a texture that maps London's changing fabric. Just as Bowen's characters, '[c]aught between the conflicting terrors of claustrophobia and agoraphobia, of grinding proximity and desolate expansiveness...negotiate uncharted spaces'⁷⁶ so too, Towheed suggests, do they produce the feelings that accompany these. The war's reworking of London's spaces, its alterations to the fabric of the city, effected a texture that, in turn, textures the bodies that inhabit it – it is this interplay between old and new spaces, displacements, and indeed the continued presence of absent spaces that haunts Bowen's characters:

Nowhere is this more apparent than in her wartime stories collected in *The Demon Lover and Other Stories*, for at no time was the spatial experience of millions of fellow Londoners more acutely felt and their expectations more disruptively challenged...Bowen's

⁷⁴ Towheed, p. 120. See also Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle's 'Torn-off Senses' in *Angelaki*, 3: 3 (1998), pp.153-158 (discussed in Chapter One of this thesis).

⁷⁵ Towheed, p. 125.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

wartime fictional characters, perpetually in transit and forever forced to engage with material objects in the world around them, atavistically betray the spatial origins of both language and identity; but, more importantly, they also display the extent to which individuals have invariably defined themselves in relation to the constantly changing explosive spaces, filled as well as cleared, that they have had to negotiate, occupy, and even inhabit.⁷⁷

By tracing how the war affected the topologies of war-torn spaces and indeed subjects, Towheed's analysis places Bowen amongst those writers whose aesthetic registers the war's alterations to *feeling*. In altering spatialities, the war alters the very fabric and textures of people's emotional lives and indeed, of their selves. What Towheed tracks in Bowen's *Demon Lover* stories is the 'flux in the demarcation of space, its causes, and consequences, and above all, its effect on human temperament'.⁷⁸

Such an alteration might be pointed to in Bowen's 'A Love Story: 1939'⁷⁹, in which the lives of three 'couples' (Mrs Massey and her daughter Teresa; the Perry-Duntons, and lovers Frank and Linda) become intertwined at a hotel in Ireland. As Phyllis Lassner remarks, the characters 'struggle desperately to remain intact at the moment history proves the futility of their efforts'.⁸⁰ Finding themselves all, in their own ways, displaced from their homes to be placed in the hotel by the war, the story is charged with the 'lack of an individuality...that forms the greatest danger to Bowen's characters'.⁸¹ Observing that the characters become so intermingled it is difficult to tell their stories apart, Lassner considers the story a mourning of 'individual psychology...[and how] in its violation of national and cultural boundaries World War

⁷⁷ Towheed, p. 131.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 117.

⁷⁹ 'A Love Story: 1939' (CS, pp. 481-498) was first published in *Horizon* 1.7 (July 1940) and later published in her 1941 collection *Look at All Those Roses*.

⁸⁰ Lassner, p. 85.

⁸¹ Ibid.

It threatened the loss of individual and cultural freedoms'.⁸² Towheed's discussion of the spatialities of war might be understood as an extension of Lassner's remarks that suggests the story figures not only the war's 'lack of individualisation' but also the ways it alters topographies and spatialities, fabricating subjectivity in new ways.

This may be registered in the narrative thread supplied by Mrs Massey, who, in an instance of the war's displacements, finds herself in the company of Mr Perry-Dunton. Perry-Dunton is in the hotel because the war has stopped him and his wife from returning to England from their honeymoon, while for Mrs Massey the war has taken her lover, and this loss has driven her out of her home and into the hotel lounge. Throughout the story, Mrs Massey's disorientation is figured as a loss of bodily and spatial certainty: on arriving at the hotel lounge her daughter 'steered her mother round the screen to the fire' (497), Mrs Massey's 'manner was swaggering' (498), and she doesn't 'know myself what I'll do, from minute to minute' (498). Her sense of where she is becomes a matter of where her lover isn't, and this dislocation is textured by the materials that make up that space: 'Mrs Massey looked angrily round the lounge and said: "They've changed the chairs round, since." She pointed to an empty space on the carpet and said: "*That* was where he sat... There isn't even his chair" (498). The war's effects on Mrs Massey's ability to map and navigate her topographies, its anaesthetisation of feeling, and the boundaries of feeling, is exemplified in her drunkenness, which registers not only a disorientation of bodily and social relations, but a transgression of these:

Mrs Massey was not equal to the walk back... There had been talk, before they left... of telephoning to the village for a car. Mrs Massey would not brook the idea. 'I won't give trouble,' she said. 'There's trouble enough already.' Magnificent with protest, she now stood

⁸² Ibid., p.86.

trembling and talking loudly and sweeping her hair back at the foot of the stairs. 'I should never have come,' she said. 'But how could I stay where I was? We'll go home now; we'll just go quietly home – Are you gummed there, Teresa?...' Mrs Massey said: 'I don't know what you all think.'...Majestic and dazed between her escort, Mrs Massey stumbled along in a shackled way. (505-506)

So affected is she that, rather than get into the car belonging to the man who has offered to drive her and her daughter home, she 'passed quietly into the open lock-up next door' and gets into Clifford Perry-Dunton's car. Intoxicated, Mrs Massey registers no violation of social manners or propriety. Informed by Clifford, who has only been in the car to look for his wife's gloves, that she is in the wrong car, she 'settled herself by him contentedly. "There's my daughter to come," she said, "and a man from the hotel. Just wait, now, and they'll show you the way"' (506). Returning home, however, even the familiarity of her own fire is disorienting: 'Mrs Massey and Clifford...now sat in two armchairs opposite the fire. "I don't understand," she said. "How did we come in your car?"' (509) Throughout the story Mrs Massey's loss has been textured by a spatiality of disorientation. The affect of this unexpected, and war-wrought proximity, however, accumulates throughout the story, altering, in the wake of disorientation, not only Mrs Massey's feeling, but the very texture of her being. To answer Mrs Massey's question, Clifford draws out his wife's gloves from his pocket to explain: 'Looking intently at the pussy gloves, Mrs Massey's eyes for the first time filled with tears. The access of some new feeling, a feeling without context, resculptured her face' (510).

Mrs Massey's 'new face' (510) figures the intersections between texture and spatiality that Towheed and Ahmed's arguments suggest. Here the displacements of war, its clearing out and filling of space, is registered not only in the feeling that results from Mrs Massey's proximity to Clifford – a proximity only made possible because of the time, and timing of the war – but in how the very topography of Mrs Massey's face

bears witness to the war's effects. One of the observations Towheed makes about Bowen's war-time spaces is that these represent space not only *cleared* by war, but *filled* by it. Mrs Massey's body is 'filled' and 'accessed': it is as if it bears the same fragility, the same impressions of the war, as the material of London. Throughout his analysis, emotion, for Towheed, is a response to the war, its altered spatialities, and the intersections of spatiality with materiality. Space alters the materials, fabrics and textures of landscape, building, object and body; these alterations fabricate subjectivity. Most importantly, the spatial alterations that mobilise material uncertainty about the subject proceed from war. The precise relationship between emotion and space, or emotion and the material, however, remains unclear. On the one hand, emotions are a response to the war and its changing topographies. Experienced as a reaction to changes in space that also affect the topologies of the body, they become 'commitments' and 'investments' that characters 'put into' London, and each other. Yet people also have 'emotional space' in Towheed's analysis, and he argues that it is the war's proximities, peoples' 'incursions into' this that drives stories such as 'Careless Talk' or 'Mysterious Kôr'.⁸³ Not only is emotion displaced and relocated throughout the argument, exerting, like Mrs Massey's 'new feeling', pressure from both the 'inside' and 'outside' of the subject, I want to suggest it is precisely the possibility of displacing emotion – its spatial uncertainty – that mobilises Towheed's reading. For if, as Towheed insists, the importance of space in Bowen's work is 'its filling with the accreted emotional responses of those who have occupied it, for these seeming empty spaces are in fact full',⁸⁴ it is also the situation of characters in this 'emotionally filled space' that allows Bowen's wartime fictional characters to exemplify 'the extent to which individuals have

⁸³ Towheed, pp. 126-128.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 130.

invariably defined themselves in relation to the constantly changing explosive spaces, filled as well as cleared, that they have had to negotiate, occupy and even inhabit'.⁸⁵

In locating the complexities of Bowen's spaces, Towheed's argument displaces emotion, and, I suggest, depends on being able to displace emotion both into and out of the subject in order to describe its disintegration. If Bowen's characters define themselves in relation to space, they do so in relation to space 'filled' with emotion, emotion 'accreted' from their own feeling. These spaces don't acquire force in themselves, then, but through their implied relation with emotion. Rather than exemplify Towheed's argument, I want to suggest that Mrs Massey's face registers the deconstructions that make it possible. 'Resculptured', Mrs Massey's face does not gain its fragility, its materiality, from the war, but from emotion. While the intersections of space and materiality may alter the feelings of that body, they alter it because that body is already sculptured by feeling. Bennett and Royle observe that prosopopeia, in Bowen's novels, dissolves characters, bodies, and subjects by figuring how, 'in order to enable the figuration and reading of a face, description unavoidably isolates and represents its features, makes and unmakes a face'.⁸⁶ Prosopopeia, then, 'constitutes the rhetorical basis of characterization as such – not simply another rhetorical figure, but figuration itself, the figuration of figuration, the uncanny, hallucinatory ground of the literary'.⁸⁷ Mrs Massey's prosopopeia, however, supplements the uncanny forces of the literary with emotion itself: what makes and unmakes Mrs Massey's face is emotion, the 'access of some new feeling' (510).

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 131.

⁸⁶ Bennett and Royle, p. 150.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 145.

Mrs Massey's resculptured face, then, not only indexes the ontologies of insecurity Ahmed attributes to climates of anxiety, but also registers this as an insecurity about the subject, an insecurity that war's spatial disorientations and dislocations amplify, reveal even, but do not create. It is important, here, that 'A Love Story: 1939' was written in 1940 *before* the *Demon Lover* collection in which Towheed locates Bowen's dislocations and displacements of space and subjectivity. But it is also set before it was written, indeed, set farther back into the beginnings of the war. Before I turn to consider this further, however, I want to suggest that what distinguishes Bowen's texts from those that Ahmed analyses is their acuity to these ontological insecurities. Rather than mobilise the insecurity of particular ontologies, Bowen's texts mobilise an insecurity of emotion itself: instead of reading feeling in her stories these are, already, reading emotion. They are a feeling for feeling fascinated not by the origins of emotion, but preoccupied with its absence.

For Ahmed, the texts she analyses are selected for their performance of particular emotions: crucial to this is her discernment that although these operate as case studies, these emotions are not 'in' these texts, but instead are the work these texts 'do'. As such, 'each chapter takes a different emotion as a starting point, or point of entry, and does not "end" with the emotion, but with the work that it does'.⁸⁸ Anticipating that readers might find her methodology, 'for a book on emotions, which argues that emotions cannot be separated from bodily sensations....very oriented towards texts'⁸⁹, Ahmed notes that she offers close readings of texts precisely because she is interested in the ways figuration is vital for understanding the 'emotionality of texts' not normally

⁸⁸ Ahmed, p. 14.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

understood to be figurative. In a footnote to her remarks here she makes an astute, albeit deceptively simple point, for scholars of emotion across the disciplines:

It might be tempting to contrast this model of ‘the emotionality of texts’ with sociological, anthropological or psychological research, which involves interviewing people about their emotional lives... The difference between my research and interview based work is not that I am reading texts. It is important to state that interviewing people about emotions still involves texts... The distinction between my research and interview based research on emotions is in the different nature of the texts generated; the texts I read are ones that already exist ‘out there’ in the public, rather than being generated by the research itself... We need to avoid assuming that emotions are ‘in’ the materials we assemble (which would transform emotion into a property) but think more about what the materials are ‘doing’, how they work through emotion to generate effects’.⁹⁰

While Ahmed’s remarks denaturalise distinctions between which kinds of ‘materials’ are useful for ‘reading emotion’, her methodology at the same time seems to naturalise a distinction between emotion produced in a research environment and that at work in everyday practices. I am reminded, here, of Jenefer Robinson’s distinction, which I explored in Chapter Two, between literary texts that are useful for the study of emotion and those that aren’t. Those that aren’t, for Robinson, are postmodern texts that manage emotion to such a degree that it is unrecognisable, whereas those that are useful tend to be drawn from nineteenth century texts. I want to suggest that the desire to locate an authentic emotion, one not affected by the literary or fictional, is at work in both of these discussions. What is helpful about Ahmed’s point is that it reminds us that the materials generated for the work of emotion (interview transcripts, analysis of person-to-person interactions, photographs or films of facial expressions) are no less ‘textual’ and no more natural than overtly constructed texts. But it does this by implying a distinction between texts whose ‘work’ is accomplished *through* emotion and texts

⁹⁰ Ahmed, p. 19 n22.

whose work *is* to produce emotion. Precisely why she makes this distinction is unclear, yet it suggests a discourse of emotion working at the level of criticism, in which theorising the work of these powerfully political texts also provides a way to contain their affect through critical analyses. Bowen's stories, I would suggest, push this problem even further.

Unlike those 'materials' whose textuality Ahmed reveals, Bowen's stories have an acuity to their textuality. What I want to go on to argue in the rest of this chapter is that Bowen's texts not only do not *naturalise* their 'emotionality', as Ahmed might put it, but suggest a preoccupation with *denaturalising* the possibility of reading that 'emotionality', and any reading it might invite. Here I'd like to return to Mrs Massey's 'feeling without context'. That this is contextualised by her looking at Mrs Perry-Dunton's gloves suggests, paradoxically, a context for this feeling without context. While the gloves, on the one hand, might work through their belonging *to* Mrs Perry Dunton – thus triggering a set of associations for Mrs Massey such as young love, youth, innocence, a nostalgia for love untouched by war or even for pre-war feeling itself, the gloves also seem to intensify feeling into its own object. That the gloves might signify their meaning through association with Mrs Perry Dunton's hand is, at the same time, worn away in a sequence of movements that produce the gloves while appearing to reveal them. Tracing the gloves' appearance, backwards, draws out a series of displacements: Clifford puts the gloves in, and takes them out, of his pocket; they are left in the car by Mrs Perry Dunton; she doesn't want them; and indeed even the moment in which Clifford finds them refuses to give up their location: 'He reached into the Alvis, switched the dashboard lights on and got in and sat in the car to look for Polly's gloves. Mist came curdling into the lock-up after him. He put the wrist-length, fluffy gloves in one pocket' (504-505). Whatever they may be attached to is also

detached from them through this play of movements. What is crucial, here, then, is not the feeling in the gloves, their ‘signification’, but instead the work these gloves accomplish. In this sense the gloves exemplify Ahmed’s arguments about the work emotion does: it mobilises and makes possible relations, contacts, and contiguities. Yet the gloves do this in the text with a kind of staging of their own work: the gloves, if they ‘do’ emotion’s work, do not mobilise a specific emotion but instead mobilise ‘a feeling without context’.

Critics have observed that Bowen’s texts resist interpretation. As Neil Corcoran remarks, ‘acts of writing and reading are themselves constantly offered to readerly inspection and interpretation’.⁹¹ Throughout this project I have explored how a resistance to reading emotion is vital to these textual slippages and mobilities. For Corcoran, it is through Bowen’s ‘intense sensitivity to the semantic, acoustic, and etymological interconnections between words, to the autonomy of their dealings with one another, and to the way one might feel possessed or acted upon by them, passive before their suasions and invitations’ that the textures of her writing exceed mere ‘mannerism’.⁹² While Corcoran argues that ‘the ‘vibrating force’ of Bowen’s language is the force which precedes everything else’⁹³, I am interested in drawing out the way Bowen’s stories imply emotion with this ‘force’. The deployment of ‘context’ in describing Mrs Massey’s feeling indexes an intertexture of temporality and contiguity that suggests these gloves and Mrs Massey’s feeling register a textuality of emotion that exceeds Ahmed’s arguments. While Ahmed reads texts *of* feeling, Bowen’s stories are, I suggest, texts that feel. Context, from ‘to weave together, connect’⁹⁴ is ‘the weaving

⁹¹ Neil Corcoran, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Enforced Return* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p.3.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁹⁴ See OED Online, etymology and entries one, two and three for ‘context’ (noun).

together of words and sentences, literary composition...a continuous text or composition...the connection or coherence between the parts of a discourse'.⁹⁵ A context is quite literally then, to borrow Bora's discussion of texture, the *TEXTURE* of a text: as such, context registers the *TEXTURE* whose labour of affects might be, as Bora described, 'unsprung'.⁹⁶ A feeling *without* context, however, is feeling whose origin can't be perceived, read, or unsprung: it is precisely a feeling that does not accede to what Bora calls the 'epistemic pressures that textures seem to beg'.⁹⁷ The gloves, offering a texture and materiality that over-signify touch, do not provoke a reading of their significance for Mrs Massey, but instead a fascination with the very desire for significance, the kind of reading, these textures demand: 'looking intently', the 'intensity' of Mrs Massey's gaze is etymologically doubled with the 'intent' her gaze searches out. What she feels, however, is not the glove's associations, but her own feeling for feeling. The glove's economy is that of emotion: it works, in the story, by mobilising a series of contiguities and differentiations whose relations – though enabled by emotion – do not give it up.

It is this challenge to feeling's context that suggests a need to revisit the contexts that have been ascribed to emotion in Bowen's work. As I observed earlier, Ahmed argues that when texts mobilise emotions, they are mobilising histories of articulation. What Towheed's discussion identifies, I have suggested, is a criticism of Bowen's work that articulates a historicisation of the 'emotionality' of her short fictions. This context, in scholarship on Bowen's short fiction, has contracted around the temporal and spatial contexts of her *Demon Lover* stories within her oeuvre, and her oeuvre's historicity. The radical affects of Bowen's short fiction are specified in her war stories, and particularly

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Bora, p. 100.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 115.

those published during and after the Blitz, attributing their feeling to the time, and texture, of war. ‘A Love Story: 1939’ and ‘Unwelcome Idea’, however, trouble this contextualisation of Bowen’s alterations to feeling and subjectivity. Written within a month of one another, shortly before the Blitz, and located in Ireland, these challenge the origination of Bowen’s radical topography of the subject in the alterations to the temporal, spatial, and material fabric of London during the Blitz. Whilst the textures of these stories – the slides and flutters, the gloves and resculptured face – affirm that the war mobilised feelings of uncertainty, they also, I have tried to show, link these susceptibilities not to the war, but to the work of emotion itself: war amplifies this, but does not inaugurate it – this is one way of thinking about how Bowen’s texts are moving. While I have focused on the work of specific textures figured in her stories, however, I want to turn now to her stories as textures themselves.

In their discussion of *The Heat of the Day*, Bennett and Royle describe the feeling that Bowen’s novels ‘have an aesthetic density, force and range which hang, suspended in their own strange atmospheres: it is as if every paragraph of a Bowen text, even every sentence, is already overhead, in the air’.⁹⁸ This texture is, they argue, already registered and at work in Harrison’s description of his context as ‘sheer kink’:

‘I appeared to be up against sheer kink’ (136), says Harrison. ‘Sheer’: adjective, ‘bright’, ‘thin’, ‘pure’, ‘mere’, ‘downright’, ‘vertical or very nearly’. Also, a noun, ‘sheer’ as ‘a very thin fabric’ (*Chambers*). ‘Kink’: noun, ‘A short twist or curl in a rope, thread, hair, wire, or the like, at which it is bent upon itself’ (*OED*). . . . But ‘kink’, too, it should be stressed, as ‘a mental twist: a crick: a whim: an imperfection’ (*Chambers*). All of these senses cross over, fold into one another, get knit up, knotted and undone, snipped off, started up again elsewhere. . . . Proliferating in all that links a text with weaving or knitting (Latin *texere*, *textum*, ‘to

⁹⁸ Bennett and Royle, p. 96. This discussion takes place in their chapter ‘Sheer Kink’ (pp. 82-103). The page numbers in parenthesis refer Bennett and Royle’s in-text citations from the OED, Chambers Dictionary, and the Penguin edition of *The Heat of the Day*. I have retained these for clarity.

weave') and in all that binds narrative to notions of unfolding and to the analysis of threads and lines, *The Heat of the Day* is sheer kink.⁹⁹

These proliferations texture the novel with the kinky figures of knitting and its needles, Robert's tie, a string around a parcel, woolwork and, most importantly, the ways '[r]eferences to Shakespeare's plays, whether in the form of narratorial allusions or in discussions between characters, are woven throughout Bowen's work'.¹⁰⁰ It is these intertextual relations that make *The Heat of the Day* a fabric of displacements that 'picks up, picks at, undoes assumptions of personal identity, and thus undoes the values of all constructions of the individual, social, political, erotic and ethical on which they rest'.¹⁰¹ For Bowen scholars who have responded to this reading of Bowen, the kink in this logic of reading is Bennett and Royle's proposition that 'the correspondences between these writers entail a rereading and displacement of intertextual relations which would allow us to appreciate not only Bowen's work as Shakespearean, but also Shakespeare's work as importantly Bowenesque'.¹⁰² The 'co-implication' of Shakespeare and Bowen challenges any hermeneutics of the real that these texts may appear to invite and, rather than suggest that these intertextual relations proscribe the possibility of Bowen's texts being 'realist', these instead 'relentlessly affirm that there is no real life, no nature, no truth and indeed no self not fundamentally haunted by effects of fiction'.¹⁰³ This fabrication of the real kinks 'any presentation and unfolding of 'character', any narrative of the self, or of love'.¹⁰⁴ Almost tacked on here, love however soon emerges as the very 'sheer otherness', the 'delirious knotting and

⁹⁹ Bennett and Royle, p. 86.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁰¹ Bennett and Royle, p. 89.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 85.

undoing, ecstatic mental twisting'¹⁰⁵ of textuality. *The Heat of the Day*, Bennett and Royle argue, is 'a knitting and knotting of stories that leaves no notion of love standing free of the radically dispossessing power of the dramatic and the fictive'.¹⁰⁶ Picking up on the knitting that textures Robert and Stella's love life, Bennett and Royle assert that '[l]ove is sheer kink'.¹⁰⁷

The discussion of love in 'Sheer Kink' is brief – once the thread of Stella and Rodney's knitting is pointed out, it appears to be dropped, making space to trace the weave of democracy, ethics, and madness. Yet it re-emerges, a few pages later, affirming 'the sheer kink at the origin of their love, at the very start of their love story'.¹⁰⁸ It is this affirmation that allows 'Sheer Kink' to return to the novel's Bowenesque-Shakespearean intertexture, to how '[l]ike Shakespeare's, Bowen's writing operates through multiple knittings of 'fiction', 'books' and 'acting', on the one hand, and 'life' on the other'.¹⁰⁹ Love and this intertexture are thus knitted – and knitting – throughout the discussion. Although they are along the same lines – they are both 'sheer otherness', 'sheer kink' – these intertextual relations and love, however, are never discussed together, in the same place. Instead 'love' punctuates the discussion, joining the novel's intertextual relations with its fabrication of the real. But love itself disappears from the discussion. Love works here like a slip stitch, in which the knitter passes the stitch to the other needle without knotting it – this allows the next stitch to

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 87-88. Bennett and Royle describe sheer kink as 'a logic of what in another context in Bowen's novel is called ' 'sheer "otherness" '. They take the phrase from *The Heat of the Day*.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 90. Knitting, Bennett and Royle observe, fabricates love in *The Heat of the Day*: 'Love is sheer kink. The lovers Robert and Stella, we are told, knitted together the stories of their experiences into the larger story of their love: 'In the two years following 1940 he and she had grown into living together in every way but that of sharing a roof. Soon they could both conjecture the ins and outs of each other's days, and of evenings which had to be spent apart they knitted together the stories when they met' (99). Love is the interweaving, the fabrication of 'a common memory' which, while rendering everything 'no more than simulacra', is itself a common memory of what was never experienced, of what never happened' (p. 99).

¹⁰⁸ Bennett and Royle, p. 95.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 95.

pass in front, allowing the slip stitch to bind by disappearing; the magic of the slip stitch is that it knits multiple fabrics at once. If, as *Still Lives* proposes, the sheer kink of love in *The Heat of the Day* lies ‘in an exchange of words which are never exchanged, in the phantom of an exchange which can never be known or be forgotten’¹¹⁰, then love’s disappearance from ‘Sheer Kink’ figures this phantom exchange – love gives ‘Sheer Kink’ the slip, it fabricates it.¹¹¹ Love is knit through ‘Sheer Kink’; it knots the novel’s intertextual relations with its suspension of ‘every conventional conception of fiction and history, of literature and criticism, of presenting a narrative, a tale or account’.¹¹² But it is also knit out of it: as Bennett and Royle observe, ‘[a]ny critical account of the work of these writers, and of their intertextual relations, can only be supervised by a logic of sheer kink, can lead only to sheer kink’.¹¹³ Love’s slip not only stitches the emptiness of emotion to the textures of Bowen’s novels, but also registers how the ‘aesthetic density’ of Bowen’s writing, its intertextures, are knitted through this moving space, through emotion’s phantom exchange. That emotion textures Bowen’s intertextuality with Shakespeare in *The Heat of the Day* remains, however, only ever implied.

In his study of the ‘return’ in Bowen’s work Neil Corcoran turns to Bowen’s short fiction to explore how emotion textures the intertextualities of her writing.

Observing that ‘[s]usceptible’ is a much repeated word in Bowen’s critical prose, and

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ One effect of slip-stitching is that turning the work at the end of each row will produce multiple fabrics at once. While Bennett and Royle compare love in *The Heat of the Day* to ‘a glove, which, once turned inside out, can no longer be worn except with the truly disarming uncertainty of whether the hand is inside or out’ (p. 90), love’s sheer kink, its sheer otherness, also recalls the slip-stitch perfected by Tolstoy’s Anna Makarovna in his 1849 novel *War and Peace*, who, ‘by a secret method known only to herself...knit at the same time on the same needles’ two stockings and would ‘produce one out of the other in the children’s presence, when the pair was done’ (Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, trans. Rosemary Edmonds (London: Penguin Books, 2009). Tracey Stock explains how to do this on her knitting blog FreshStitches (URL: <http://www.freshstitches.com/wordpress/?p=913>, last accessed Sept 15, 2010).

¹¹² Bennett and Royle, p. 98.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 96.

‘mobile’ is a word everywhere in her work, both fictional and non-fictional’¹¹⁴, Corcoran draws a correspondence between the feeling of Bowen’s work, and its movement. For Corcoran, the stories in Bowen’s *Demon Lover* collection, ‘her finest single volume of stories, is a book of many unhappy returns’.¹¹⁵ Tracing the ‘literary return which is allusion or intertext’¹¹⁶, Corcoran’s inventory of the many lines, plots, titles, and traditions that Bowen’s stories pick up and inflect not only affirms the intertextures of these stories, but deploys these to contextualise her stories’ powerful affects. These ‘return[s] to the already written’ lend her *Demon Lover* stories the texture of a ‘re-reading [that] is also an invitation to us as readers to read the traditions themselves differently’.¹¹⁷ As with Bennett and Royle, one such tradition is the distinction between fiction and reality itself: ‘...another reason why acts of reading and writing figure so prominently in Bowen’s work: in Elizabeth Bowen life itself is deeply, indeed inextricably, penetrated by text, what she calls ‘livingness’ by writtenness’.¹¹⁸

In ‘The Demon Lover’, Corcoran observes that Bowen re-writes the plot of a Scottish ballad in which a lover returns from the dead: her ‘masterstroke’ is that she ‘made the ballad’s otherworldly ship, on which the lover carries off the woman, the London taxi from which there is no exit’.¹¹⁹ With ‘Mysterious Kôr’, Bowen forms a third in an intertextuality already mobilised by Andrew Lang’s sonnet ‘She’:

dedicated to his friend H. Rider Haggard, and evoking the city of the dead which figures prominently in Haggard’s novel *She* (1887).
Lang’s sonnet interiorizes or psychologises Kôr as the name for ineradicable or ineffable human longings and desires; and the story’s

¹¹⁴Corcoran, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 147.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 149.

¹¹⁷ Corcoran, p. 6.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 9.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 150.

heroine, Pepita, in a state of intense sexual frustration, moulds her own personal fantasy further out of the sonnet's invitation.¹²⁰

Corcoran notes that 'Mysterious Kôr' stages an acuity to its own relationship to this intertextual literary past: the characters quote the poem 'prominently, and poignantly, in the story, and the poem itself is discussed by the characters'.¹²¹ Reading 'Sunday Afternoon', Corcoran observes how the story 'ends when the Anglo-Irishman Henry Russel insists, twice, on calling the young girl of the story not by her actual name, Maria, but by the name of the daughter of Prospero's island in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Miranda'.¹²² Proust is quoted 'in a similarly glancing but more recondite way' in 'Ivy Gripp'd the Steps' when Gavin Doddington 'revisits the scene of the definitive traumatizing events of his childhood...and thinks of his fate as 'l'horreur de mon néant'' while the 'neant' also resonates with 'the connotations given to it by Sartréan existentialism'.¹²³ Lastly, 'The Happy Autumn Fields' is offered as 'an allusion' to Tennyson's 'Tears, Idle Tears', in which the 'lyric persona' cries without understanding. The 'empathetic and nostalgic desolation' suffered by Mary is, Corcoran writes, 'presumably developed' from this persona's 'condition'. In this return to the feeling of the past, 'The Happy Autumn Fields' points to how Tennyson's poem is "about the most potent of absences", and so is the story: so potent, in fact, that the absence becomes present again to the heroine'.¹²⁴

These moments generate what Corcoran calls Bowen's 'literary allusiveness'. Acknowledging that the intertextures these citations form is 'not entirely characteristic' of Bowen's writing, he adds that they do, 'of course, occasionally figure elsewhere in

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Corcoran, p. 151.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Corcoran, p. 151, p. 152 n9.

¹²⁴ Corcoran, p. 150. Corcoran cites Christopher Rick's reading of 'The Princess' in *Tennyson* (London: Macmillan, 1972), p.199.

her work'.¹²⁵ The significance of these quotations, allusions and literary returns is "almost transparent, although still inexplicit"¹²⁶, yet Corcoran speculates that it lies in the stories' historical moment. The examples Corcoran provides are all from Bowen's *The Demon Lover and Other Stories*, the same texts that ground Towheed's analysis. Like Towheed, Corcoran suggests that the texture of these stories reflects the changes to the fabric of London and its inhabitants. But for Corcoran, there is another devastated topography that Bowen's texts inscribe: literature itself. Confronted by 'the peculiar wartime combinations of distress and apathy'¹²⁷, the *Demon Lover* stories, Corcoran suggests, 'could be read as the writer's attempt to draw corroborative strength from some fragments of a literary tradition when engaged on the representation of an experience which was considered by many to lie beyond the capacity of "literature"'.¹²⁸

Corcoran argues that Bowen's intertextures enable these stories to represent 'an undermining of public, official, attitudes to the war....betrayal, isolation, hallucination, sexual thwarting, jealousy, manipulation, profound anxiety. Their emotions are a very long way indeed from the official narratives of the Blitz'.¹²⁹ Not only do these intertextual relations signify the resistances of the feelings of the 'explosive present' to representation, but they also signify that present's susceptibility to the feelings of the past. For Corcoran, Bowen's '[r]eferentiality is both a way of staying the present against hopeless confusion, and also a reminder of the besetting nightmares of the past from which the present, literally explosively in the Blitz, cannot break free'.¹³⁰ Corcoran's analysis reminds us that the fabrics of Bowen's short stories are, like *The Heat of the Day*, textured by their intertextuality. The tissue of these intertextual relations, I want to

¹²⁵ Corcoran, p. 151.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 152.

¹²⁸ Corcoran, p. 152.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 153.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 154.

argue, however, is feeling: in each of the examples Corcoran provides, what the texts return for is a literature of feeling, a way to represent what is unrepresentable in the present. The texture of this intertextual fabric is feeling.

For Corcoran, the return to the feelings of literatures past is consolatory in a present whose emotions have no literature. Although Corcoran acknowledges that the feelings summoned may not in themselves be consoling, their representation, he implies, offers a literary topography that stitches these feelings of the past into the present, as if these intertextures may map and orient the feelings of those in the devastated present. This return supplies a graft, a repair to the emotional wounds of the present and what Bowen named ‘the *desiccation*, by war, of our day-to-day lives’.¹³¹ Whether or not these heal, seems beside the point – that they are grafted, graphed, is the act of consolation itself, supplying literary emotions to a city, people and literature that ‘have no feeling to spare’.¹³² In her introduction to *The Demon Lover* collection, Bowen writes that ‘I see war (or should I say feel war?) more as a territory than as a page of history’.¹³³ The *feeling* of war touches the nerve of a ‘territory’ whose origin itself is already unsettled by affect: although the etymology of territory is ‘usually taken as a derivative of *terra* earth...the original form has suggested derivation from *terrēre* to frighten’.¹³⁴ That the collection suggests a topography of fear is affirmed in her recognition that her reader ‘may say that these resistance-fantasies are in themselves frightening. I can only say that one counteracts fear by fear, stress by stress’.¹³⁵ Bowen goes on to map out the territory the collection forms where ‘[t]he past, in all these cases,

¹³¹ Preface to ‘The Demon Lover’ in *MT*, p. 96.

¹³² Bowen, ‘London 1940’ in *MT*, pp.21-25, p. 25. For the relationship between ‘graft’ and ‘graph’, see the OED entry for ‘graft’.

¹³³ ‘London 1940’ in *MT*, p. 95.

¹³⁴ See the etymology for ‘territory’ in the OED Online.

¹³⁵ ‘London 1940’ in *MT*, p. 97.

discharges its load of feeling into the anaesthetized and bewildered present'.¹³⁶ Bowen's preface to the collection thus appears to corroborate this sense that the *Demon Lover* stories might be particularised, within her oeuvre, as a site of literary allusion and citation that supplements the devastation of the present with the feeling of the past. Bowen writes that, in a London 'transformed [by darkness] into a network of inscrutable canyons...one developed new bare alert senses, with their own savage warnings and notations....by day one was always making one's own new maps of a landscape always convulsed by some new change'.¹³⁷ She implies that her stories, in the wake of feeling these inscrutable canyons and convulsions, returns to the past because 'life...emotionally torn and impoverished by changes, had to complete itself in some way'.¹³⁸

Developing Corcoran's observations, Shannon Wells-Lassagne ascribes the feelings of Bowen's work to a return to sensationalism, and her aesthetic discrimination of sensation: these offer 'an "unreality effect"' in which 'sensationalist language...comes to take the centre stage rather than sensationalism itself'.¹³⁹ More particularly, for Wells-Lassagne the sensationalist textures of Bowen's writing extends their intertextuality to their discernment of those sensations. Thus, when the characters of 'Mysterious Kôr' quote Lang's poem, their discussion of aesthetics 'offers a model for the reader himself to follow' whereby 'what becomes important is less the story than the language used, and its effect on the reader...it is a tool used to highlight how one

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 98. Bowen writes that '[t]ill the proofs came, I had not re-read my stories since they were, singly, written. When I read them straight through as a collection, I was most struck by what they have in common. This integrates them and gives them a cumulative and collective meaning that no one, taken singly, has by itself' (pp. 95-96).

¹³⁷ 'London, 1940' in *MT*, p. 96.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ See Shannon Wells-Lassagne, 'She-ward bound': Elizabeth Bowen as a sensationalist writer' in Osborn, Susan (Ed.), *Elizabeth Bowen: New Critical Perspectives* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2009), pp. 96-112.

should or should not read'.¹⁴⁰ It is, however, precisely this acuity to reading feeling that I suggest requires a return to re-reading what Bowen's stories feel in these intertextual relations. That, as Corcoran argues, 'Mysterious Kôr' 'interiorizes or psychologises Kôr as the name for ineradicable or ineffable human longings and desires',¹⁴¹ seems affirmed in Pepita's reply to Arthur's suggestion that 'girls think about people': 'How can anyone think about people if they've got any heart? I don't know how other girls manage: I always think about Kôr' (CS: 730). But Pepita and Arthur remind us that the *mysterious* Kôr, rather than locate the heart, turns it into nowhere:

He reflected, then said: 'But the poem begins with "Not" – "*not in the waste beyond the swamps and sand*" – " And it goes on, as I remember, to prove Kôr's not really anywhere. When even a poem says there's no such place – '

'What it tries to say doesn't matter: I see what it makes me see. Anyhow, that was written some time ago, at that time when they thought they had got everything taped, because the whole world had been explored, even the middle of Africa. Every thing and place had been found and marked on some map; so what wasn't marked on any map couldn't be there at all. So *they* thought: that was why he wrote the poem.' (730)

That Lang's poem interrogates or at the very least registers the inability of topography to locate and stabilise suggests that a topography of feeling can at best be only a topology. This is heightened by Lang's having written the parodic *He*, which Patricia Murphy observes 'foreground[s] the novel's excessive interest in historiographic and scholarly paraphernalia...includ[ing] mock footnotes that identify absurd historical, textual, etymological and orthographic references'.¹⁴² In 'She' itself Lang appears to summon the dead and forsaken city from the 'nay', 'not in' and 'not there' that describe its location. In this sense, I would suggest that Bowen's 'model of reading' here, does

¹⁴⁰ Wells-Lassagne, p. 109.

¹⁴¹ Corcoran, p. 150.

¹⁴² Patricia Murphy, 'The Gendering of History in *She*' in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 39, No. 4, The Nineteenth Century (Autumn, 1999), pp. 747-772, p. 755.

indeed emphasise feeling, but, rather than discriminate the correct way to read and identify this, it instead cautions against psychologising Kôr, or any other intertextual reference, as an emotional interiority or symbol for feeling. Rather than locate feeling *in* the literary return, I want to suggest that Bowen instead returns to the literariness of emotion – it isn't the emotions of literatures past that texture the fabric of these stories, but instead their 'emotional crisis'.¹⁴³

This, I want to suggest, is exemplified by the one intertexture Corcoran does not discuss: Bowen's 1936 story 'Tears, Idle Tears'. In my discussion of Frederick's tears and the literariness of emotion, I observed how in this story, the attempt to locate an origin for emotion turns up only its own fictionality, figured in the citation of Tennyson's poem that is not only the title of the story, but also at the heart of the 'primal scene'. This story mobilises the problem of reading emotions in either literary texts or people and reading these by linguistic or somatic signs. Any origin of emotion discovered by reading, Frederick's tears show us, is only re-covered. The story figures nothing less than a radical challenge to a hermeneutic model of emotion, and, indeed, to any theory of emotion that would suggest it offers a zone of recuperation. In particular, I want to suggest that the story's hooking together of textuality and emotion troubles the recent move to define emotion, following Brian Massumi, as the 'personal...the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning'.¹⁴⁴ Bowen's story also mobilises what Rei Terada has located as emotion's 'secrecy' as an absence of meaning that impels reading and interpretation. What 'Tears, Idle Tears' returns to, then, is the problem of reading emotion that moves

¹⁴³ Preface to 'The Demon Lover' in *MT*, p. 97.

¹⁴⁴ Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (London: Duke University Press, 2002), p.61.

Tennyson's poem. Emotion is not the result of interpretation, the representation of interpretation, but an interpretive event:

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.¹⁴⁵

'Tears, Idle Tears' is, most likely, omitted from Corcoran's discussion of the literary return because it is not one of the stories in *The Demon Lover*, and as such does not fit into his reading of the stories' emotional charge against the fabric of war-time London. First published in *Listener* in 1936, the story was later collected in the 1941 collection *Look at all those Roses*.¹⁴⁶ But its omission from Corcoran's literary returns is complicated when we realise that 'Tears, Idle Tears' is a direct engagement not only with the same Tennyson poem to which 'The Happy Autumn Fields' would 'allude', a few years later, but also the same moment *of* that poem. 'Tears, Idle Tears', then, initiates an intertexture of feeling to which Bowen returns, in 'The Happy Autumn Fields', to 'discharge the load of the feeling past into the anaesthetized and bewildered present'. Not only do both stories return to the same poem, but their intertextual proximity suggests that 'The Happy Autumn Fields' returns to the problem of reading emotion. While Corcoran reads the intertexture of 'The Happy Autumn Fields' as an *allusion*, a passing reference, I would argue that this intertextuality indexes the preoccupations with emotion that I suggest are mobilised by the textures of Bowen's short fiction. Not only does this story return both to the terrain – 'the happy Autumn

¹⁴⁵ Tennyson, 'Tears, Idle Tears' in *Alfred Lord Tennyson: Selected Poems*, ed. by Day, Aidan (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 125.

¹⁴⁶ In *Collected Stories* 'Tears, Idle Tears' is listed amongst stories from the thirties, yet the 'Bibliographical Note' places it in *Look at all those Roses* (Gollancz), published 1941. Marcia Wilke's bibliography of Bowen's work clarifies that 'Tears, Idle Tears' was first published in *Listener* 16 (2 Sept. 1936), pp. 447-49. 'The Happy Autumn Fields' appeared in *Cornhill* 963 (Nov. 1944), pp. 238-251, before being collected a year later in *The Demon Lover and Other Stories* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1945).

fields' – that in Tennyson's poem appears to give rise to the problem of reading tears, but it also returns to the literariness her own story locates at the heart of the emotion. In order to graft feeling from the past into the bewildered topographies – spatial, bodily, textual – of the present, then, what Bowen returns to is not the location of feeling that might be read and thus discharged, but instead to the literariness of emotion itself. Corcoran argues that Mary, in 'Happy Autumn Fields', contracts 'the most potent of absences' from the past into the present.¹⁴⁷ Yet I suggest that, rather than locate feeling, no matter how raw and wounding, for the present, what Mary discovers is the literariness of emotion, that '[a]ll we can do is imitate' (CS: 684).

The intertextualities of Bowen's short fiction extend the interest in emotion as a problem of reading already indexed by her stories' textures of feeling. Rather than pick up and weave through her stories feelings from the past, from literatures past, however, the fabric of Bowen's war time stories is fabricated by intertextualities that touch on the literariness of emotion. Feeling into literary texts from the past, Bowen feels out those that are, in their own ways, feeling around for feeling. Critics have tended to read Bowen's peculiar feeling for war time London in her acuity to the *affects* of war, its uncertainties, its dislocations, and its 'strange growths'.¹⁴⁸ Bringing the uncertainty of emotion from the past into the present, however, her stories don't represent the war's feeling but registers these as a problem of discerning emotion. Not only do Bowen's texts find a way to actuate the uncertainties and instabilities at the heart of reading emotion to textualise the war-rent present, but they also, importantly, demand that we recognise that these uncertainties are, also, in the past.

¹⁴⁷ Corcoran, p. 150.

¹⁴⁸ Preface to 'The Demon Lover' in *MT*, p. 94.

For Corcoran, 'The Happy Autumn Fields' stages its own reading of the relationship between the past and the present figured by these returns:

'The Happy Autumn Fields' includes a sudden, disconcertingly self-reflexive sentence about its cross-temporal correspondences: 'We surmount the skyline: the family come into our view, we into theirs' (100); and this is the way earlier literature works in these stories too: as these texts come newly into our view, so we come into theirs, and the ensuing judgements are deeply unsettling. Or, in another definition of intertextuality in that story, 'Everything one unburies seems the same age' (103).¹⁴⁹

Whilst elsewhere his discussion implies that the feeling of the past is brought into the present, here instead what is unsettling is precisely the affect of these intertextual relations between the past and present. Rather than offer a compensatory gesture that returns emotion to the present, unearthing emotion from the past turns up the present's uncertainty of feeling in the past. It unsettles because the rupture that should appear when nostalgia aligns the apparently certain feeling of the past with the uncertain present, instead, disappears: what ruptures is precisely the temporal disjunction and the containment nostalgia implies. As an 'acute longing for familiar surroundings',¹⁵⁰ nostalgia doesn't signal a memory of emotion in the past, but a longing for the sense of familiarity *attributed* to the past, the sense that, at one time, emotion could be given an origin, it could be familiarised as at home in, and home to, objects, whether spatial, literary and indeed subjective.

What these intertextualities register, then, is not the loss of a literature, space or subjectivity that contains and gives access to emotion, but the loss of the illusion that emotion emerges from, or secures, those topographies. The war does not anaesthetise the ability to feel, so much as ideas about what it means to feel. Here I would suggest

¹⁴⁹ Corcoran, p.153-154. The parenthetical references are Corcoran's citations using the 1981 *Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen*.

¹⁵⁰ See the OED Online entry for 'nostalgia'.

that the war, as the twin technology of the cinema, also, like the cinema, generates its particular affects not because it changes emotion, but because we have, through emotion, the capacity to be affected. Heather Bryant Jordan remarks that the *Demon Lover* collection demonstrates Bowen's 'mastery of the short story in its depiction of the sensations of wartime'¹⁵¹: I want to suggest that the sensations these stories 'depict' are not those of wartime but the discernment that the fragmented, anaesthetised and bewildered present registers the unchartability and unspecific terrain at the heart of emotion. Implicit in Jordan's study is the question that titles it: 'how will the heart endure?' Picking up on Bowen's preface to *The Demon Lover*, the stories, for Jordan, are 'saving hallucinations', implying that these stories preserve a heart so that it, and we, may endure: the stories keep us in touch, during war's desiccations, with feeling. But if the stories, as Bowen writes, return to the past to retrieve the 'I', what they bring forward is not the consolation of emotions past, but instead only the crises of emotion from the past to 'fill the vacuum for the uncertain "I"'.¹⁵² Rather than index a crisis of subjectivity mobilised by the war's unreal affects, these intertextures of feeling register Rei Terada's contention that 'destroying the illusion of subjectivity does not destroy emotion...on the contrary, emotion is the sign of the absence of that illusion'.¹⁵³ If, as Corcoran suggests, the literary textures of Bowen's short stories invite us to read the traditions differently, then these intertextures of time and feeling invite us to re-read our traditions of emotion, and return the war's dissolving affects to emotion, both present and past. This is an invitation Bowen herself seems to issue in her review of Ivy Compton-Burnett's *Elders and Betters* when she defines the 'task the Victorians failed

¹⁵¹ Heather Bryant Jordan, *How Will The Heart Endure: Elizabeth Bowen and the Landscape of War* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 151.

¹⁵² 'London, 1940' in *MT*, p. 98.

¹⁵³ Terada, p. 157.

to finish, and that the Edwardians declined to regard as theirs' as the 'survey of emotion as an aggressive force'.¹⁵⁴

It is precisely this dissolution of boundaries between the present and past, however, that Corcoran finds troubling in some Bowen scholarship:

The more psychoanalytical-deconstructive elements of it, however, while valuably emphasising and illuminating her sheer strangeness...tend to underestimate the structural inventiveness and stylistic experimentation in her: difference from what has gone previously is sometimes – paradoxically, it may be – obscured...In some of this critical work too it can almost seem as though the whole writerly career is being read backwards through the lens of *Eva Trout*; and for me *Eva Trout* is, as I shall argue, a distorting mirror.¹⁵⁵

Corcoran's remark recalls my discussion of debates about the place of *Eva Trout* in Bowen's oeuvre in Chapter One. For Corcoran, what makes *Eva Trout* a 'distorting mirror' is its 'fundamental insecurity about personal identity...sometimes so underminingly severe as to make the novel's modes of characterization congruent with radical postmodern conceptions of the hollowing-out of subjectivity'.¹⁵⁶ Traversed both by the 'co-ordinates of the earlier novels' (which it 'throws out of alignment') and 'sheer emotional weirdness', *Eva Trout* for Corcoran is not so much the culmination of Bowen's literary preoccupations, but an 'utterly unpredictable end to Elizabeth Bowen's career as a novelist; and it is a novel which, in every weave of its texture, forgoes serenity'.¹⁵⁷ Corcoran's reading of *Eva Trout* hinges on the relationship between fiction and reality that preoccupies the novel, and he argues that the novel's intertextures with at least a dozen or more writers, including Shakespeare, makes it 'by far the most

¹⁵⁴ in *MT*, pp. 163-168, p. 164.

¹⁵⁵ Corcoran, p. 12.

¹⁵⁶ Corcoran, p. 128.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 131.

foregroundedly literary of Bowen's works'.¹⁵⁸ Beginning with the observation that Eva and Elsinore's final parting is another Shakespearean intertexture whose 'moment also has an emotional authenticity which is hardly ever apparent elsewhere in a novel deeply preoccupied with, and plotted around modes of, the inauthentic'¹⁵⁹, emotional authenticity becomes a locus for the distinctions between, and problem of differentiating, fiction and real life that 'disfigures' the novel. According to Corcoran, the texture of *Eva Trout* is that of 'a kind of parable which we cannot retell in any terms other than those it offers us, it nevertheless insinuates, very powerfully and provocatively, in its sometimes extreme clashing of register, that the categories of living and of making fictions are confused only at our greatest peril'.¹⁶⁰ Corcoran's analysis culminates in the argument that ultimately what *Eva Trout* teaches us is the importance of distinguishing between 'living' and 'making fiction', categories whose distinction turns on authentic feeling. Despite insisting on the 'perils' of confusing these, however, Corcoran's analysis ends with the problem of how 'the reader is given by *Eva Trout* a new knowledge about the capacity of the empathetic imagination, the imagination which, in a childless writer, may recreate with such overwhelming energy and inwardness the experience of both mothers and children...'.¹⁶¹ Here Bowen's very success, the 'authenticity', to borrow Corcoran's language, with which her novel mobilises maternal feelings, leaves him with a problem about the kinds of emotion he has used to distinguish the ethical imperatives of the 'real' that he attributes to the novel:

¹⁵⁸ Corcoran, p. 140. Amongst Bowen's intertextualities Corcoran notes those with Dickens, Lawrence, George Eliot, James, Browning, Proust, Chekhov, Flaubert, Herbert, Pater, Descartes, Keats, Wordsworth, Ibsen, and Lewis Carroll. See Part IV of 'Childless Mother: The Disfigurations of *Eva Trout* or *Changing Scenes* (1968), in Corcoran's *The Enforced Return*, pp. 126-144.

¹⁵⁹ Corcoran, p. 128.

¹⁶⁰ Corcoran, p. 144.

¹⁶¹ Corcoran, p. 144.

But what principle of empathy is at work when the mature woman writer of *Seven Winters*, published in 1942, imagines her mother looking at her when she is a very young child, and then tells us, in her own person, ‘I know now the feeling with which [my mother]...thought “That *is* my child!”’? This writer is childless, she has never been a mother: so she cannot ‘know’ this feeling by experience. So how can she ‘know now’ what her mother, or any mother, ever felt? But no adequate reader of Elizabeth Bowen will doubt, nevertheless, the perfect truth of the claim she is making.¹⁶²

My interest, here, is not so much in Corcoran’s analysis of *Eva Trout*, but in the problem of time and feeling he seems to be left with – of how the ‘return’ in Bowen’s work turns up feeling with no origin, emotion whose veracity appears to lie not in its authenticity, but its fictionality. Corcoran leaves the question unanswered: we are, no doubt, meant to ascribe it to the affective power of Bowen’s writing. Yet I suggest that this is same problem that troubles Corcoran about Bennett and Royle’s reading of Bowen’s intertextures with Shakespeare.

In a footnote to one of his discussions of the Shakespearean allusions woven throughout Bowen’s work, Corcoran responds to *Still Lives*: ‘I agree, and shall refer to Shakespeare more than once again in this study; but I don’t know that I follow them in their related view that Shakespeare’s work is “importantly Bowenesque”’.¹⁶³ Reading Shakespeare as Bowenesque doesn’t just cross a line, then, but casts its lines too far: the intertexture Corcoran would corroborate shies away from this fabric of fictional correspondences that would cross, and cancel out, temporal boundaries. For Corcoran the allure of authentic emotion enables him to insist on certain logics of temporality, literature, and experience, but the affects of Bowen’s violations of these logics haunt his reading of *Eva Trout*. If, for Corcoran, *Still Lives* makes the critical error of reading Bowen’s ‘disfigured subjectivity’ back throughout her oeuvre, and in so doing makes

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Corcoran, p. 44, n6.

the even more problematic move of catching Shakespeare out, or into, this network of dissolutions, his engagement with the intertextual affects of *Eva Trout* and the *Demon Lover* stories suggests an effort to contain these in contexts of time, oeuvre, and experience. Rather than distinguish between fictional and authentic feeling, however, Corcoran's distinctions are haunted by the very deconstructions emotion mobilises, that, as Rei Terada suggests, 'we feel not to the extent that experience seems immediate, but to the extent that it doesn't; not to the extent that other people's experiences remind us of our own, but to the extent that our own seem like someone else's'.¹⁶⁴ As if answering Corcoran's question about what 'principle of empathy' is at work when Bowen is able to claim her mother's experience as her own, Terada observes that 'vicariousness' is vital to feeling: citing Adela Pinch's observation that for Hume, 'feeling may always be vicarious, something we generate in attributing it to another figure', Terada adds that '...Derrida's implication is that I myself am one of those other figures'.¹⁶⁵

That *Eva Trout*'s emotion becomes the remainder for which Corcoran's argument can't account, yet is also the discourse that mobilises his critical disagreement with 'the more psychoanalytical-deconstructive elements' of Bowen criticism, exemplifies Terada's observation that discourses and ideologies of emotion work through a 'circular positive claim' that 'casts emotion as proof of the human subject'.¹⁶⁶ Such claims do not locate subjectivity but identify how 'subjectivity is read out of the experience of disattachment that makes it seem as though a subject were there to be

¹⁶⁴ Terada, p. 22.

¹⁶⁵ Terada, p. 163, n16. For Pinch's discussion of Hume see *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 43-44.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

attached'.¹⁶⁷ The intertextures and returns to feeling that Corcoran observes, then, along with Towheed's location of the *Demon Lover*'s emotional displacements and dislocations of subjectivity, figure the critical gestures that register not the subject's containment of emotion, but the pressures that conceptualising emotion exerts on ideas of subjectivity. Articulating this through a reading of the place of emotion in philosophy of mind, Terada's remarks extend through literary theory and aesthetics to implicate textual practice:

...theories of emotion depict dilemmas in the philosophy of mind; emotion theory is the internal supplement to the history of that philosophy. Classical philosophy has not been wrong about emotion but rather righter – and less classical – than it has cared to be. The nonclassical nature of the discourse of emotion indicates that emotion exerts pressures on theories of subjectivity; emotion engenders what Ronald de Sousa calls "*a kind of parallel philosophy*".¹⁶⁸

Thinking about 'feeling', Terada argues, always figures an emergence of 'post-structural' emotion in theories of emotion in the past. The theories of emotion that unfold from what Terada enfolds into poststructuralist thought historicise non-subjective emotion not in the 'waning of affect' in the twentieth century, but in the way rhetoric about the emergence of a modern subject, and, more recently, a post-modern non-subject, works as what Terada elsewhere terms an epistemological defence to produce an emotional subject in the past rather than return non-subjective emotion to that past. For Terada 'the classical picture of emotion already contraindicates the idea of the subject'.¹⁶⁹

Terada's remarks are helpful for thinking about the problems of reading emotion with which Bowen's texts confront us, offering one way of understanding the sense shared by most recent Bowen scholarship, regardless of critical orientation, that

¹⁶⁷ Terada, p. 10.

¹⁶⁸ Terada, p. 90.

¹⁶⁹ Terada, p. 7.

Bowen's texts 'interpret their interpreters'.¹⁷⁰ Throughout this project I have aimed to trace the ways this is at work in how the emotionality of Bowen's short fiction has been read, and discursively mobilised, for these critical readings. In so doing I have tried to suggest that Bowen's short fictions have been particularly vulnerable to this, not because they are emotional, but because they are utterly preoccupied with emotion's resistances to reading. Texturing her stories with this preoccupation, Bowen's intertextualities, rather than affirm the time, place, and history of emotion, collapse the temporal, spatial and historical distinctions emotion has been deployed to construct.

Terada argues:

The purpose and the very existence of emotion have traditionally been associated with persistent difficulties in the philosophy of mind. Feared as a hazard or prized as a mysterious gift, emotion indexes strains in philosophy – the same strains that poststructuralist theory argues fracture the classical model of subjectivity. Thus "poststructuralist" dissatisfaction with the subject appears in *classical* thought about emotion: theories of emotion are always poststructuralist theories.¹⁷¹

One consequence of Terada's observations, here, is that thinking about feeling implicates the discourses, ideologies and historicity of that thought.

The unfolding of emotion, of *an* emotion, then, is enfolded by emotion: it is this work of emotion that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick articulates when she describes certain affects – shame, disgust, contempt – as 'switch points' for individuation, an 'individuation that decides not necessarily an identity, but a figuration, distinction, or mark of punctuation'.¹⁷² For both Sedgwick and Terada, emotion, even if it leads to other feeling, does not reside in what is discerned, but works at the level of discernment itself – it is the movements or circulations that make distinctions possible. In this way a causal economy for emotion, such as Brian Massumi's, which I raised in the

¹⁷⁰ Ellmann, p. 4.

¹⁷¹ Terada, p. 3.

¹⁷² Kosofsky Sedgwick, p. 117.

introduction to this project, can only exist if one attempts to isolate and extrapolate one feeling from another, to interrupt the chain or contiguity of relations that has initiated such an economy. Terada remarks that '[a]cknowledging the feeling as a feeling...leads at the least to more feelings'.¹⁷³ The possibility of acknowledging *the* feeling, however, is a contiguity of distinctions already in motion. The boundaries exerted by a reading of emotion accentuate this circularity, amplifying emotion's movements rather than interrupting or containing these. What I would take from these analyses is that the consequence of the relation between the singularity of a particular emotion and the indefinite space of emotion that discerns it is that emotion does not name a particular geography of relationality or dimension of contiguity, but instead is the interpretive event that gives rise to the possibility of phenomenalisng these distinctions. Whilst emotion might appear to *point* towards particular interpretations or apprehensions, these are not the site, but instead the effects of emotion's movements.

By historicising the problem of reading emotion Terada draws attention to how the theoretical, aesthetic or practical unfolding of emotion works by enfolding the instabilities that emotion mobilises. Terada's remarks, when mapped onto the emerging call for theories of emotion and affect that can account for the demands that changing ontologies exert on the subject, act as an urgent reminder that the conception – and changing conceptions – of the subject and subjectivity do not challenge emotion, but instead challenge our discourses of emotion.¹⁷⁴ Attending to emotion's 'internal

¹⁷³ Terada, p. 127. Kosofsky Sedgwick offers an insightful critique of theories of affect that refuse to differentiate specific emotions; my aim in this project has not been to describe 'emotion' at the expense of specific emotions, but instead to attend, throughout the project, to how reading Bowen always involves a reading of an emotion 'under erasure' – it is precisely the way specific emotions interface with the work of emotion that I am interested in here.

¹⁷⁴ Here I would draw attention to Patricia Clough's remarks which echo other work emerging from the 'affective turn' that affect, as opposed to emotion, is more timely for the techno-ontological developments of the twenty-first century: 'Affect is also theorized in relation to the technologies that are allowing us both to "see" affect and to produce affective bodily capacities beyond the body's organic-physiological

supplement' to the history of philosophy, Terada's remarks move the thinking and rethinking of the subject's historical, spatial, and literary topographies into emotion's fold.

Emotions, Sara Ahmed tells us, 'tell us a lot about time; emotions are the very "flesh" of time'.¹⁷⁵ 'Flesh' offers an appeal to bridge the political, methodological and critical bodies that might be divided by emotion, by yoking emotion's work to what this work might allow us to do:

The time of emotion is not always about the past, and how it sticks. Emotions also open up futures, in the ways they involve different orientations to others. It takes time to know what we can do with emotion. Of course, we are not just talking about emotions when we talk about emotions. The objects of emotions slide and stick and they join the intimate histories of bodies, with the public domain of justice and injustice. Justice is not simply a feeling. And feelings are not always just. But justice involves feelings, which move us across the surfaces of the world, creating ripples in the intimate contours of our lives. Where we go, with these feelings, remains an open question.¹⁷⁶

By naming the capacities of emotion's movements Ahmed's figure accrues a geography that exceeds its own dimension, a depth that appears to extend in either direction of the 'flesh' materialised by emotion, bringing the 'near' and 'far' that emotion can reach into contact. As both the 'visible surface of the body' and 'what is enclosed by skin', Ahmed's emotion-as-flesh appears here to literalise emotion as a substance at a point in the history of thinking the subject when its loss of depth has not only become a locus for anxieties about claims to ethics, politics, and agency, but more particularly when the loss of emotion's depth threatens to insubstantiate either the remaining terrain of these

constraints. The technoscientific experimentation with affect not only traverses the opposition of the organic and the non-organic; it also inserts the technical into felt vitality...The affective turn, therefore, expresses a new configuration of bodies, technology, and matter instigating a shift in thought in critical theory (see Patricia Clough (Ed.), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) p.2).

¹⁷⁵ Ahmed, p. 202.

¹⁷⁶ Ahmed, p. 202.

claims, or the means by which a turn from the deconstructions of these claims might be executed. As if compensating for the dissolutions of borders, territories and bodies that accumulate over the course of Ahmed's study, this 'flesh' of emotion figures a zone of contact where emotion's dissolving force is recuperated into the consolation that it touches us all. Throughout, her study has denaturalised the borders that appear to contain emotion by showing us how emotion works to create them. By making emotion 'flesh', however, Ahmed's figure naturalises that it is good that this should be so, that emotion's dissolutions do not diminish its potential, but materialise it. 'Flesh' heals the critical and methodological ruptures of emotion's recent critical past, turning us to the future by leaving us with emotion's 'open question'. Bringing time, flesh and emotion together, Ahmed implies that it is time for emotion.

What Bowen's short stories tell us about emotion, however, is that Ahmed's figuration of emotion as the flesh of time moves us because of emotion's time. While Ahmed ends with an open question, pointing towards the future, Bowen's stories are textured by this question, enfolding emotion into its own past. Preoccupied with this question, repeating emotion's resistances to reading and closure whilst staging its unfolding, Bowen's stories not only imply the temporal breaks that might be pointed to as markers between modern and post-modern subjectivities, but folds the present critical interest in emotion back into emotion's past. In *The Fold*, Deleuze describes Leibniz's 'substantial vinculum' that is 'a strange linkage, a bracket, a yoke, a knot, a complex relation that comprises variable terms and one constant term'.¹⁷⁷ The vinculum's paradoxical introduction of 'minimum exteriority' to the 'absolute of interiority' is resolved, Deleuze explains, by its 'infinite fold, that can be unwrapped...only by recovering the other side, not as exterior to the monad, but as the exterior or outside of

¹⁷⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold* (London: Continuum, 1993), p. 126.

its own interiority...Such is the vinculum, the unlocalizable primary link that borders the absolute interior'.¹⁷⁸ The vinculum works like a grid, 'filtering' and 'sifting' and it is these movements that substantiates bodies both as bodies, and as 'my own'.¹⁷⁹ This work of the vinculum, the movement it engages is what creates the fold; it is in this fold that the body 'becomes' real not in its reality but in the 'realization of phenomena in the body', in the folds of the body substantiated by the vinculum.¹⁸⁰ According to Deleuze, this 'realization of the body' is the realization of the 'vinculum itself'.¹⁸¹ I want to suggest that Bowen's short stories not only stage this work of the vinculum through their 'cases' – generic, individual, emotional, and psychoanalytical – that open out, offering an interior only to enfold this in the problem of reading emotion itself, but her intertextualities belie a fascination and interest in emotion's ability to do this, to be an 'infinite fold', compelling folding and unfolding, without giving itself up. Working as an oeuvre, a body of folds that unfold a fascination with emotion's movements, Bowen's short fictions not only pleat the various styles and aesthetic distinctions that contour the literary and theoretical topographies of the twentieth century, but contract these back to the very emergence of emotion itself when she displaces into each other emotion and the short story, 'that, "in a spleen unfolds heaven and earth" – or should'.

That Bowen turns away from her contemporaries to locate the emotion of the short story suggests that Shakespeare's 'spleen' touches on something vital; what I want to suggest is that what it touches on is the absence that is at the origin and the heart of emotion. For Shakespeare, emotion as we know it was not yet available in his vernacular. Although the word was used in the late sixteenth century to refer to a

¹⁷⁸ Deleuze, p. 127.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁸⁰ Deleuze, p. 137.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 138.

political or popular disturbance, and by the early seventeenth century was being used to refer to a movement or migration out, emotion itself didn't begin to migrate from 'out' to 'in' until nearly a century after Shakespeare's death and, according to Alexander Schmidt's *Shakespeare-Lexicon*, the word 'emotion' does not occur in Shakespeare's work.¹⁸² Although emotion might be rooted in 'moving out', then, the designation of a subject that this movement out has been presumed to indicate is an invention of emotion's history. Emotion is, as Terada observes, the parallel philosophy that unfolds alongside the invention of the subject. Bowen once wrote that the writer 'opens and shuts time like a fan...and this is important because every story demands...some particular sort of timing of its own'.¹⁸³ I want to suggest that her definition of the short story not only points forward to the present's preoccupation with emotion, but also returns us to emotion's past, its origin in the unlocalizable movements that may touch on, but do not stabilise, emotion. Opening out, unfolding emotion, her short stories enfold it to its root, where emotion remains only in its moving out, its displacement of its own origins. It is precisely these movements, for Shakespeare, that describe emotion without locating it. Through Shakespeare, Bowen shows that literature's capacity to say something about emotion, to say something about it in advance of having a word for it, tells us something about what emotion is. Derrida remarks that if there is something about literature that he likes, '[t]here would be the passion...there where nevertheless

¹⁸² Page 357 of the third edition of Alexander Schmidt's authoritative Shakespeare lexicon goes from 'emnew' to 'empale'. See the *Shakespeare-Lexicon: A Complete Dictionary of all the English Words, Phrases and Constructions in the Works of the Poet* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1902). According to the Oxford English Dictionary Online, the first recorded use of 'emotion' was in 1579, indicating 'a political or social agitation; a tumult, popular disturbance' in 1579; a 'moving out, migration, transference from one place to another' in 1603. In the 17th century it was used both to refer to a physical 'moving, stirring, agitation, perturbation' (first recorded in 1692) and 'any agitation or disturbance of mind, feeling, passion; any vehement or excited mental state' (first recorded use 1660). The OED dates 1808 as the first recorded use of the psychological sense of 'a mental 'feeling' or 'affection' (e.g. of pleasure or pain, desire or aversion, surprise, hope or fear, etc.), as distinguished from cognitive or volitional states of consciousness. Also *abstr.* 'feeling' as distinguished from the other classes of mental phenomena'.

¹⁸³ 'Truth and Fiction' in *Afterthought*, p. 140.

everything is said and where what remains is nothing – but the remainder, not even of literature’.¹⁸⁴ Displacing emotion and the short story into one another, Bowen’s intertexture with Shakespeare implies emotion’s taste for discovery with the promise the short story makes to encase and expose through reading what it contains. Caught in its own relation to emotion, however, the short story exemplifies emotion’s secret: that it, as Derrida writes of passion, is ‘this secret that nothing could confine...no sacrifice will ever disclose its precise meaning. Because there is none’.¹⁸⁵ This is the Bowen affect, her short stories’ feeling for feeling.

¹⁸⁴ Jacques Derrida, ‘Passions: An Oblique Offering’ in David Wood (Ed.), *Derrida: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 5-35, p. 22-23.33, n.12.

¹⁸⁵ Derrida, ‘Passions’, p. 33, n12.

Conclusion

‘that touch of the farouche’: The Queer Heart of Bowen’s Short Fiction

In her 1951 essay ‘The Bend Back’, Elizabeth Bowen considers the lure of the past for the inhabitants of a century that have endured ‘excoriations, grinding impersonality’.¹ Literature between the wars, she writes, has run its course: it ‘could not either root down deeply into the imagination or touch the heart’ and, at the mid century, the writer looks to the future by returning to the promises of the past for a literature of the heart, a heart that demands ‘to be fed, stabilised, reassured, taught’.² But if the heart is to be discovered in the past, Bowen’s essay also reminds us that its stabilities and assurances are themselves what we ‘cull from fiction’.³ The heart in Bowen’s writing is, like Geraldine’s in Bowen’s 1934 story ‘The Little Girl’s Room’, anything but secure: ‘...the little girl gave herself back to the centuries, to touch, from their heart, the very heart of your fancy, like a little girl in an epitaph’ (CS: 430).

In going back to Bowen’s writing, her scholars have been bending with her texts, tracing the displacements and destabilisations that, as Susan Osborn remarks, texture her writing with a ‘kind of strange and strenuous *perpetuum mobile*’.⁴ This thesis has endeavoured to respond to the mobilities of Bowen’s writing by inflecting emerging Bowen criticism with a feeling for how her short stories re-read emotion; in being sensitive to the feeling of her short fiction, I hope we might develop our tact for her stories’ textual affects. This sensitivity, in turn, may also inflect the critical return to emotion, affect and feeling with the acuity Bowen’s short stories have to the

¹ Elizabeth Bowen, ‘The Bend Back’ in *MT*, pp. 54-62, p. 55.

² *Ibid*, p. 54-55.

³ ‘The Bend Back’, in *MT*, p. 57.

⁴ Susan Osborn, ‘Reconsidering Elizabeth Bowen’ in *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 52, Number 1 (Spring 2006), pp. 187-197, p. 194.

textuality of feeling and the deconstructions that traverse her short fictions' preoccupations with reading emotion. In so doing, the work I have undertaken here has only begun to touch on the feeling for feeling that moves Bowen's stories.

According to Bowen, the short story has a 'poetic tautness and clarity...so essential to it that it may be said to stand at the edge of prose'.⁵ Feeling this edginess and undecidability, this project has tried to be sensitive to the ways Bowen's short fiction tenders and retracts emotion. In 'The Disinherited', Matthew Harvey, a man who 'dreaded to desiccate' is impassioned by his wife's 'uncertain manner': what he admires of Marianne is 'that touch of the farouche' (CS: 377). A manner of being both shy and repellent, 'farouche' has been traced to the Latin 'foras' for outdoors or fierce, or 'ferocum' meaning cruel: but the root is untenable, and the origin of 'farouche' is unclear.⁶ Rather than diminish its feeling, however, this uncertainty mobilises and intensifies the farouche that touches us, offends us even, invading by shrinking away. Maud Ellmann remarks that 'farouche' is Bowen's 'favourite gallicism'; not only a dictional affection, 'farouche', for Phyllis Lassner, distinguishes the affective capacity of Bowen's stories to 'tear through social and literary conventions'.⁷ Shying, repelling, engaging with its retreat, 'farouche' recalls the 'shrewish' affects that initiated this thesis. Yet, as Matthew's affection for Marianne reminds us, the impressions and manners of the farouche touch the heart, without ever apprehending it. Registering what Susan Osborn calls the 'queer' style of Bowen's writing, in which 'many of the words...appear curiously more substantial than the passage as a whole and direct us to

⁵ 'The Faber Book of Modern Stories' in Charles E. May's *The New Short Story Theories* (Athens, Ohio: Athens University Press, 1994), pp. 256-262, p. 256.

⁶ See the Oxford English Dictionary Online, entry for 'farouche'.

⁷ Ellmann, p. 114 and Lassner, p. xxi.

their definitions, the detonation in front of the meaning’⁸, this ‘touch of the farouche’ irreducibly gathers the unsettling textures, the detonations and deconstructions of Bowen’s writing with emotion.

Hermione Lee locates in Bowen’s writing a ‘convergence of sensation and detachment’⁹ that is most affecting in her writing, and writing about, short fiction. If these oppositions are inclined to meet in Bowen’s stories, however, it is because their differentiation depends on emotion. Writing about emotion, remarks Sara Ahmed, ‘doesn’t make emotion the centre of everything’.¹⁰ This, then, is my final touch – that emotion is not the centre of Bowen’s writing, but it is the heart of her short fiction. The heart traverses Bowen’s stories, displaced and dislocated – displacing and dislocating – throughout her short fiction oeuvre until it beats, with a remarkable intensity, against its own figuration in Bowen’s 1939 story ‘A Queer Heart’.¹¹ Here two sisters differentiate themselves, set each other apart, by the differences of their hearts: the dying Rosa distinguishes Hilda by her ‘shallow heart’ (561), her ‘perverse heart’ (561), her ‘wicked

⁸ Susan Osborn, ‘How to measure this unaccountable darkness between the trees’ in *New Critical Perspectives* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2009), pp. 34-60, p. 47. In the case of Bowen’s short fiction, Osborn’s observation can be applied to the word ‘queer’ itself, which repeats across Bowen’s short stories, occurring more than 39 times in the *Collected Stories* alone. A queer reading of Bowen’s short fiction is outside the scope of this project, but I would argue that it can only proceed with an attention to theorising the affectivity and affective economies of ‘queer’. Sarah Ahmed contends that ‘...“queer” is a sticky sign’ (p. 166, n3), and a queer reading must examine ‘the affective potential of queer’ (p. 146). My attention in this project to what I have called ‘the Bowen affect’ can, I hope, offer a beginning of a critical practice for reading the feeling of Bowen’s short fiction in a way that would enable queer readings of Bowen to resist debates about her sexuality, or her characters’, to focus instead on the textuality – and singularity – of her writing. In this regard a queer reading of Bowen’s short fiction underpinned by a critical theorisation of emotion might perform a critical engagement like Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s attention to the ‘queerness’ of Henry James’ writing and its particular mobilisation of ‘shame’: ‘When I attempt to do some justice to the specificity, the richness, above all the explicitness of James’s particular erotics, it is not with an eye to making him an exemplar of “homosexuality” or even of one “kind” of “homosexuality,” though I certainly don’t want, either, to make him sound as if he isn’t gay. Nonetheless, I do mean to nominate the James of the New York edition prefaces as a kind of prototype of, not “homosexuality,” but queerness, or queer performativity. In this usage, “queer performativity” is the name of a strategy for the production of meaning and being, in relation to the affect shame and to the later and related fact of stigma’ (p. 61).

⁹ Lee, *MT*, p. 6.

¹⁰ Ahmed, p. 16.

¹¹ Elizabeth Bowen, ‘A Queer Heart’ (*CS*, pp. 555-562) was first published in *Living Age* 355 (Feb. 1939), pp. 517-23.

heart, a vain silly heart' (561). Hilda's daughter wonders that Hilda 'finds the heart' (557) to go out and Hilda is faulted for having heart, for keeping heart, for taking the things Rosa had 'set my heart on' (561). Wondering if there is anything to Rosa, besides 'implacable disappointment', Hilda thinks: 'you poor queer heart; you queer heart, eating yourself out' (562). Traversing the heart with counterfeiting, unsettling, questioning and intensifying affects, 'A Queer Heart' queers the heart until Hilda touches on the secret of their distinctions: 'You're ever so like me, Rosa, really, aren't you? Setting our hearts on things. When you've got them you don't notice' (562).

If literature is to teach the heart, Bowen's short stories teach us to learn, by heart, this lesson: that the heart's emotions are not the security, the origin, or the reassurance of the subject, but instead, as Jacques Derrida writes, 'the *I* is only at the coming of this desire: to learn by heart'.¹² The heart, like emotion, is not to be touched: this is how we touch. This is the Bowen affect: impassioned, we are like the lover of 'A Walk in the Woods' who refuses to believe the woods 'had no undiscovered heart, if one could only come on it' (CS: 489).

¹² Jacques Derrida, '“Che cos'è la poesia?”' in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. by Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 223-237, p. 237.

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